Week ending April 19 1952
Every Wednesday Fourpence

JOHN BULL

THE MIGHTY BALCON

by LAWRENCE EARL

Fascinating story of the great British film producer and the famous stars he has made

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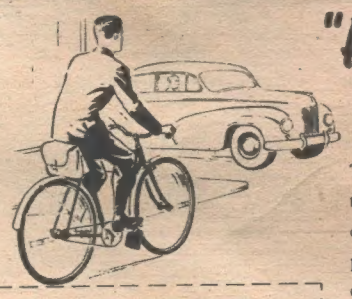

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Dr. Edith's error

"A DEGRADING EXHIBITION," Dr. Edith Summerskill calls boxing, amateur and professional. She is determined to put a stop to it.

Later this year she aims, she says, "to introduce into the House of Commons a bill on the lines pioneered in the Belgian Parliament."

The Belgian bill would make it a crime for anyone to watch, take part in, or promote a boxing bout of any sort.

DR. EDITH regards the sport as inhuman. She claims that it is not only disgusting, but that it also causes severe injuries with permanent damage to body and mind.

"It is a tragedy," she says, "to see young men made punch drunk by those who are not concerned with the boxers' health and future, but only with their own profits."

Undoubtedly a few young men are exploited by the occasional unscrupulous promoter. And some boxers get knocked about.

BUT does this justify banning the sport for amateurs and professionals? Any more than the fact that some footballers get badly hurt, and others are exploited, would make it right to stop all football?

The British Boxing Board of Control has proved by statistics that far fewer people are killed and injured in boxing than in football or in most other major sports.

A Board of Control doctor and inspector attend every professional tournament. It is their duty to report a referee who fails to stop a fight when a boxer is taking too much punishment, or is so far behind on points that he cannot possibly win.

Any referee who is the subject of such a report may, after investigation, be suspended or "struck off."

SIMILARLY, a boxer who has been knocked out or forced to retire is not allowed to box again until he has passed a medical test. If he shows any sign of overstrain in his next fight the fight is stopped and his boxing career is finished.

The only loophole in supervision is over the boxing booths at fairgrounds.

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain, which runs many of these booths, has agreed to conditions laid down by the Board of Control for conducting fights in its booths. But it is not possible to see that these conditions are always carried out in fairs all over the country. Again, there can be no control over booths not owned by members of the Showmen's Guild.

AMATEUR boxing is run by the Amateur Boxing Association. At least a thousand clubs and organizations belong. There are schools, boys' clubs, youth organizations, works' clubs and organizations of the three Services.

Courage and sportsmanship are the outstanding qualities of the amateur bouts. The stress is on tough, clean and skilful fighting.

Rules for the hundred thousand boxers and officials who come under the A.B.A. are strictly and carefully applied. Referees must pass A.B.A. tests. They are suspended if they allow contests that should have been stopped to go on.

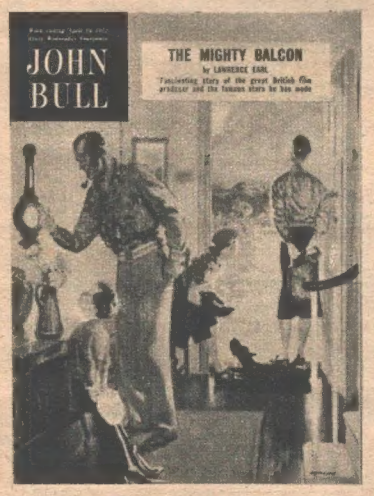
IN amateur boxing, bouts are stopped a little earlier than in the professional field. Dr. Edith is in error in talking about "punch drunk" youths. Those days are long past. Boxing today is neither more cruel nor more dangerous than any other sport.

There is a case for clearing up the fairground booths. It ought to be made illegal to put on matches for money at fairs except under the Board of Control's conditions. Inspectors should see that the conditions are observed.

But the British public will give short shrift to anyone who tries to ban the noble sport as a whole. The squeamish minority should not try to impose their views on those who regard boxing as manly and far from "degrading."

THIS WEEK'S COVER

FATHER, ever an optimist, thinks it will all blow over. "Just an April shower," he avers, Mother knows better. Somehow his showers always turn into regular downpours when they are out in them. Artist Michael Critchlow says that this isn't a picture of his own family but they have faced the same situation many times. Critchlow, a Wolverhampton man, is married to a former actress. They live in London, and have two sons.



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PLEASE I'D LIKE TO HELP THE EXPORT DRIVE!
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BUT THEY'D FORGOTTEN ENERGY ERNIE!
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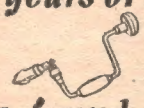

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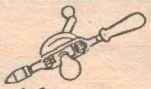

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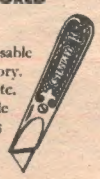

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FREE SPEECH

The caller that people try to avoid

JUDGING BY MY EXPERIENCE as a process server, whose job is to serve summonses and court orders, more people are taking what might be called evasive action than at any time since the 1930s.

They refuse to answer the door, or slip out the back way when I knock. When cornered, they deny their identity, or flatly refuse to accept a summons, not knowing, apparently, that the document is properly served if the process server touches them with it. I suppose this is all a symptom of people's mounting difficulties.—P. S., Liverpool.

Trouble Over The Wine

LICENSING LAWS relating to chemist's shops should be changed. I wanted a bottle of tonic wine for my convalescent husband. Two shops said they could not stock it, as they had no licence. The third said he had a bottle but could not sell it until after six o'clock. When I looked despondent, the helpful assistant said: "I could deliver it." I explained that I lived nine miles away, and he said: "That's all right. Just drive your car round to the front of the shop and I'll deliver it to you there." This I did and got my wine—but what a waste of time and patience. —MRS. N. O. HAGGER, Cambridge Road Farm, Wimpole, Royston, Herts.

Veterans In Fine Fettle

BILL MORDEN'S cover picture (JOHN BULL, March 29) was a fine painting, but the car depicted in it was certainly not so old as to be a rarity. If, as I guess, it is a Morris Cowley of the 1929-30 era, there are hundreds of them still in use. There are plenty of much older

cars, superbly built, still in fine fettle and treasured by loving owners. My own Humber, shown in the enclosed photograph, goes back to 1926, but even this is quite modern in the vintage world. A friend of mine recently drove overland to South Africa in a 1921 Calcott.—FRANK LONGHURST, 17 Wyndfall Way, Kenton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Split Up The Farms

I AM AN AGRICULTURAL CONTRACTOR and, like many other young men in their late twenties, would like to be a farmer. After reading your Editorial, "Jobs That Mean Food" (JOHN BULL, March 22), I would say that one way to increase agricultural output would be to split up farms into units of not more than 400 acres. Even 400 acres is a lot. Then give young men a chance to take on some of these farms by forming an agricultural bank to make advances for stock buying and buildings.—G. D. HAWKES, Devonshire Lodge, Elcot Lane, Marlborough, Wilts.

. . . Until something is done to get more reasonable co-operation between farmers and farmworkers, the drift from the land will continue. A glaring example is pay day. This should be on Friday, but, as an active member of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, I could quote many cases where it is any time between Saturday morning and Monday evening.—W. R., Devon.

The Happy Emigrant

MY SON EMIGRATED to Australia two years ago, found the country and the people grand, tried several jobs until he found the life he wanted and is now on a cattle ranch with a nice house. Recently, he married an Australian girl and they are very happy. I feel even more pleased than if he were returning home with a fortune.—MRS. G. WAITE, 13 Glenholme Road, Farsley, Leeds.

Waterless Britain

PRECIOUS WATER MAY COST £1 a load in Bermuda, as your correspondent points out ("Free Speech," March 29). But in this part of Britain there are many of us who have no water except what we catch from the roof in tanks. When these become dry we have to buy water—at £2 or £3 a load.—D. C., Crowhurst, Battle, Sussex.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S
new mystery novel
—see page 20

Perils Of Plugging

FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE moved into a new house, I soon found myself, under pressure from my wife, trying to plug the larder wall, in order to put up a new shelf. It seemed a harmless occupation—but I could hardly be expected to miss the electric cable, cunningly concealed an inch below the surface. I was, luckily, wearing rubber-soled shoes, but repairs will require the services of a carpenter, bricklayer, electrician and clerk of works.—P. N., Monmouth.

His "Secret" Photographs

ONE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS which I took while working on the Thailand railway was published with Russell Braddon's series, *The Naked Island* (JOHN BULL, February 23-April 12), and it may be interesting to describe how the pictures were taken and smuggled out. After my capture in February, 1942, I was lucky in getting most of my personal belongings (including a camera) into Changi Jail and, during the chaotic first few days, the camera was buried below a flowering bush. In spite of many careful searches it was not detected, and it was only dug up when we felt it was safe. On the railway the procedure we adopted was very simple. Having decided to take a picture, the kit would be unearthed and the camera loaded under well-organized security arrangements. Then, with the camera tucked inside my old bush shirt, I walked towards the object to be photographed, always with two friends, one on each side and slightly in front of me. The exposure had to be made without focusing and without taking the camera from inside my shirt. When the last film had been used I sold the camera to a Thai and the exposed films were carefully wrapped in paper and foil and reinterred. After a time, getting the films back to England became almost an obsession. I was once nearly caught with them as I lay in hospital and had the films hidden in my mess tin. When I was on the way to Japan the prison ship was wrecked off Formosa and my loose kit was washed overboard. I thought the films were gone until I found them on a piece of wreckage, where they had been, under water, for

One of the smuggled pictures

two days. In Japan I hid them in a sand-filled fire bucket outside the prison commandant's office. When the surrender came we found that they were hard and brittle, but with careful treatment sixteen legible prints were developed.—F. A. LIVERMORE, Surbiton, Surrey.

. . . I served as a member of the War Crimes Court in Singapore and Malaya. Most of the Japanese "bad hats" were suitably dealt with, but I do not think these trials were given the same publicity as the war crimes trials in Germany. I had to witness the hanging of several Japanese at Changi Jail.—ARMY OFFICER.

Meet Mrs. Sprake

JACK TREVOR STORY'S short story *We Must Kill Mr. Sprake* (JOHN BULL, March 22), reminded me of a chapter in my own life, except that my persecutor was a female—a very efficient buyer in a well-known store. She never missed any opportunity of making the assistants look small in the presence of customers, but when any of the directors were around she was smugly charming.—MRS. D. COOL, 5 Clarence Terrace, London, N.W.1.

Shelter For Shoppers

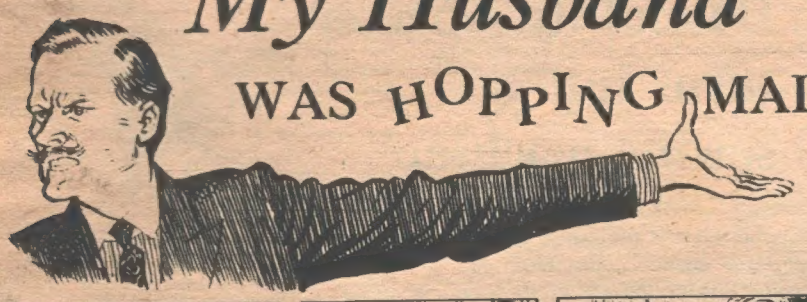
WHEN ARE we going to follow the example of towns in New Zealand and other places, where it is possible to shop in comfort in wet weather because of permanent canopies projecting from the fronts of buildings? Here, the canvas awnings that most shops use only cause the rain to drip down our necks. There should be arcaded or canopied fronts to all shops.—MRS. M. E. CAERBURN, 12 Girdlers Road, London, W.14.

The Smaller The Harder

YOUR READER WHO complained that children's garments cost more than the same sort of garments for adults ("Free Speech," March 22) does not realize that the smaller the articles the harder they are to make. I worked in a shirt factory at the start of the war, and making boys' shirts took far longer than making men's. We always dreaded getting orders for these smaller items.—MRS. E. P., Sheffield.

Letters intended for publication should be marked "Free Speech" and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

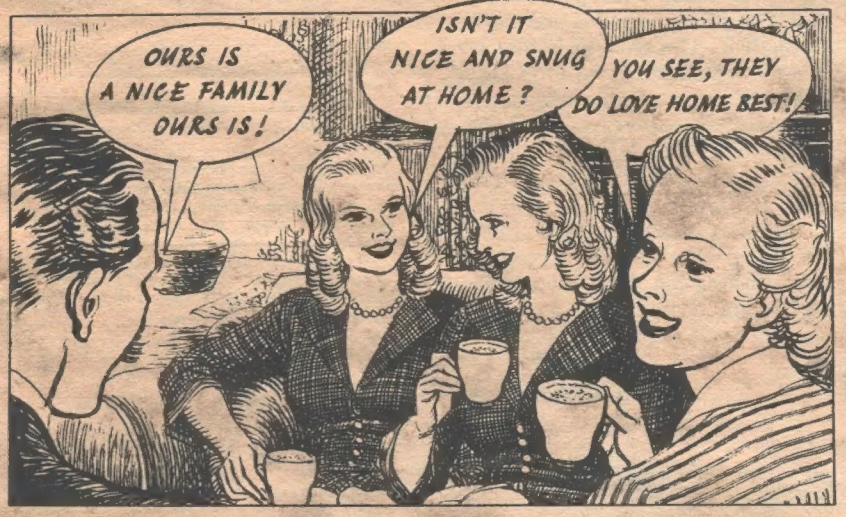
My Husband WAS HOPPING MAD



Every night that week the twins had been in late.

Then when he scolded them they said home was far too dull!

Now, a dull home is often mother's *fault, But I knew how to make amends!*



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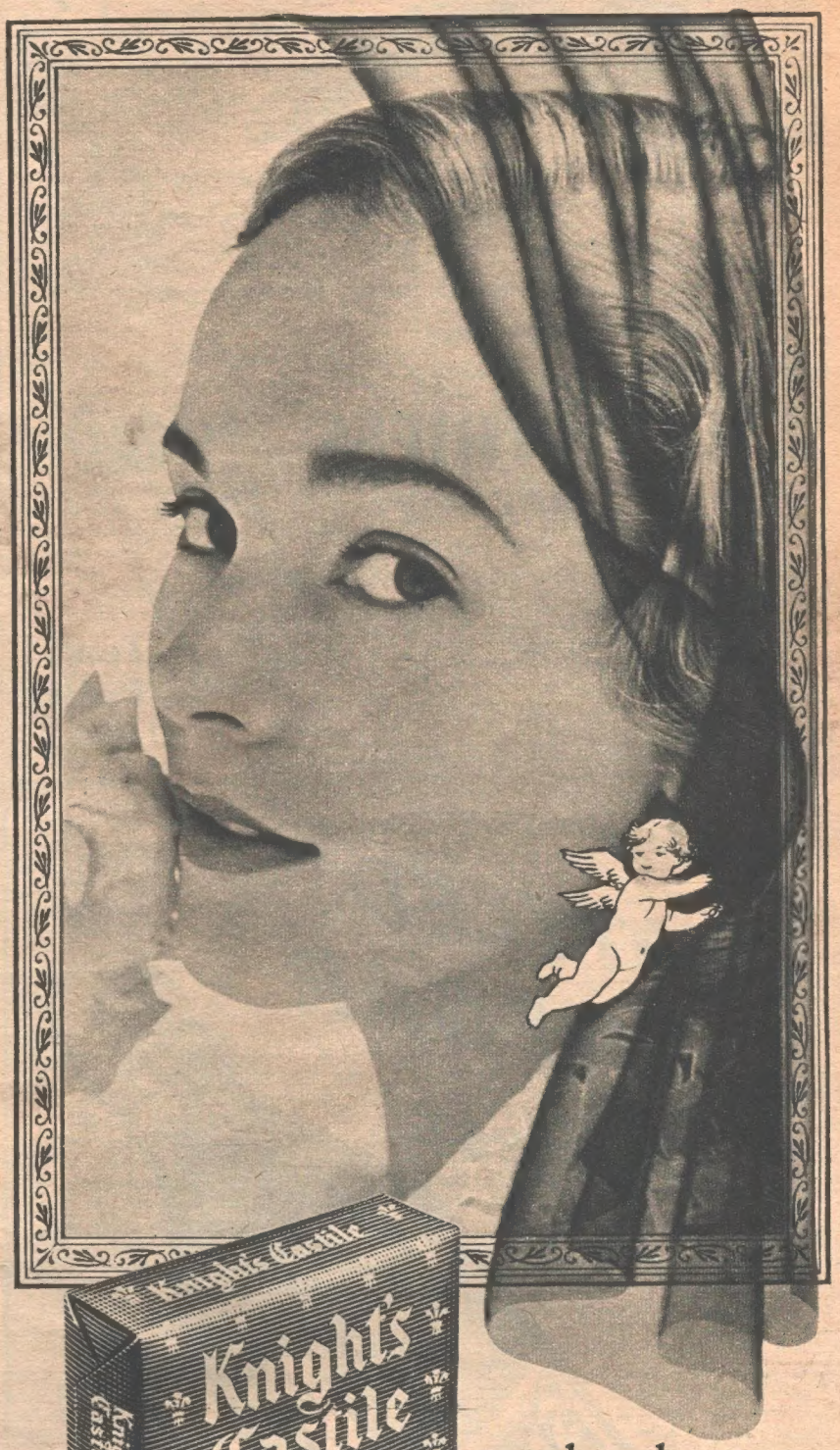

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Don't go on saying you'll treat yourself to some Wills's Whiffs *one* of these days—get a packet of these grand little cigars (3 for 1/9) tomorrow and enjoy the luxury of a really good, satisfying smoke.

Give me WILLS'S WHIFFS any day!

P.S. FOR THE LADIES

Men—sentimental creatures!—are just as thrilled as you are to get a little unexpected present now and then. (Or oftener). Give them a packet of Wills's Whiffs when they've done something useful—or when you want them to!

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6 for 3/6

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Madame Suzie is the "little woman round the corner." But from her face you'd think she was pretty tired of the seamy side of life. "Eh bien," I buttonholed her, "how are the buttons and bows?"

"*Alas,*" *sighed Madame.* "*Life renders itself insupportable. I am ver' busy, oui, but, also, I am très constipée. Oh that I hate sewing nowadays—I never want to do any pleating or piping again.*"

"Ten yards of piping can cause a lot of trouble," I said.

"*Pardon?*" *asked Madame.*

"Listen," I said. "*This* length of piping is inside your petite Mary, and everything you eat has to go through it. The trouble is that the muscles which move the food along can't get a grip on the soft, starchy foods we eat nowadays—and they don't work properly."

"*Mercy me,*" *said Madame,* "*what happens then?*"

"Binding and gathering," I said. "Your system gets hemmed in, and constipation leaves you feeling cut on the cross. But," I said, "a little *bulk* will soon put you right."

"*What ees this bulk?*" *asked Madame.*

"All-Bran for breakfast *every day*," I said. "That's the way to give those muscles the bulk they need. All-Bran'll soon make you 'regular.' Will you try it?"

"*But yes!*" *said Madame.*

"But do," I said. And, obviously, she *did.* When I saw her next, she looked capable of cutting out all her rivals. "Ooh-la-la!" I said. "You're looking magnifique!"

"*And, also, I* feel *it,*" *trilled Madame.* "*The All-Bran made me 'regular' in a week—it's done wonders for me.*"

"Naturellement," I said.

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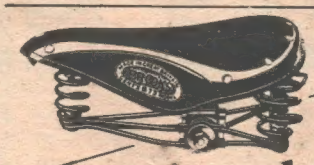

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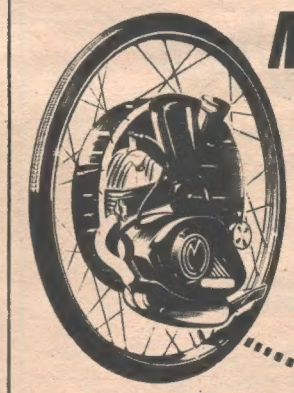

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THE MIGHTY BALCON

by LAWRENCE EARL

Sir Michael Balcon's mild manner covers a dynamic personality that has made its mark on British films. Here is the first of four articles on an amazing career linked closely with many famous stars

IT IS ALMOST AN AXIOM in the film industry that the higher levels of it consist of people who make snap decisions and then stick stubbornly to them, even in the face of contrary evidence. Sir Michael Balcon, on the other hand, loathes making up his mind. His employees at Ealing Studios consider this all to the good, and say that his attitude often results in pleasant surprises. A couple of years ago, when Ealing's star scriptwriter, T. E. B. Clarke, was assigned to work on the story for a film called *Pool of London*, he talked the idea over with John Eldridge, who was second-unit director of the picture.

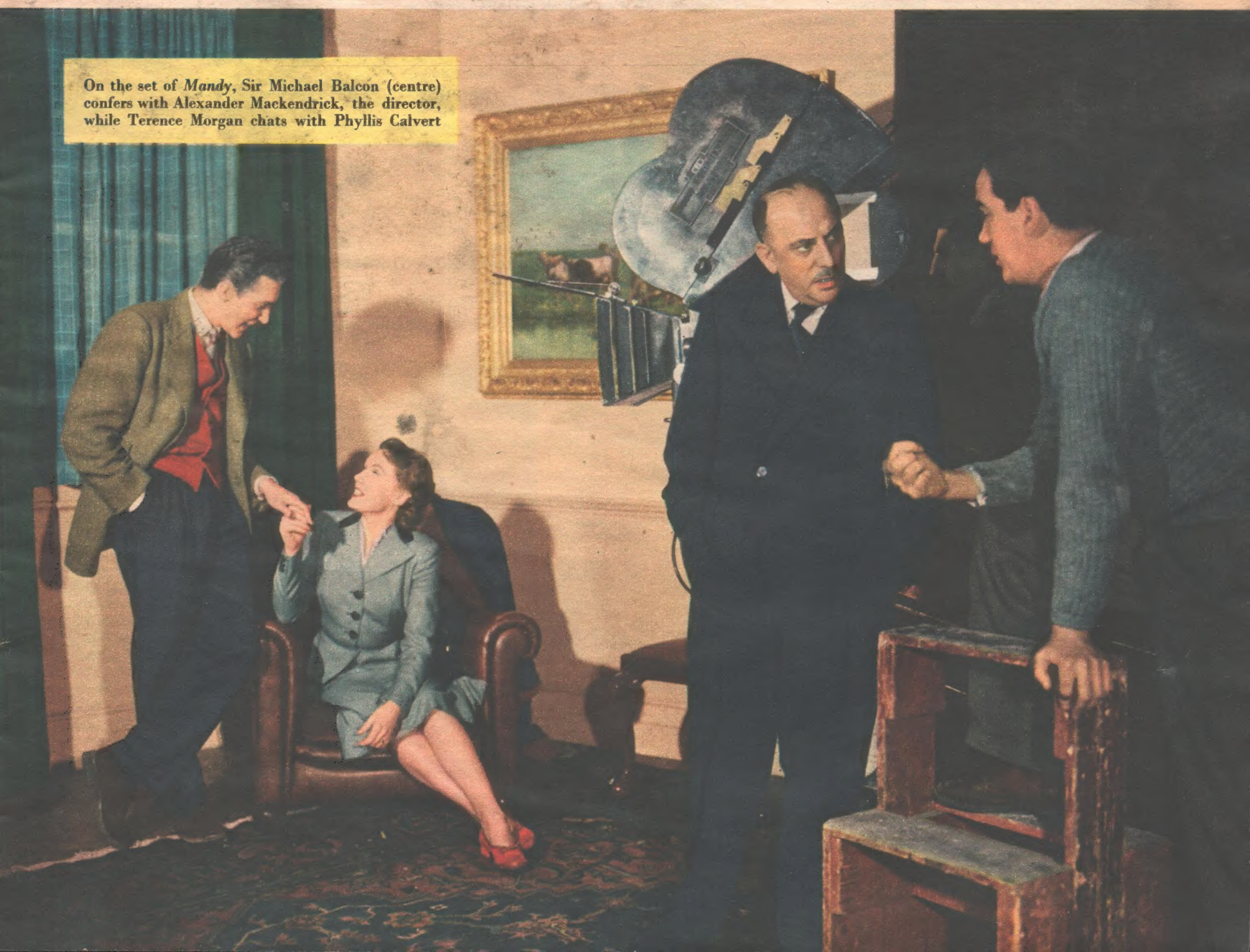
"It's not really the sort of story I shine at," Clarke remarked. "I'm not good at serious villains: I tend to make them either too melodramatic or not villainous enough."

"Why not have an outwardly very honest man in charge of a large sum of money which he means to steal?" Eldridge suggested.

Clarke went home, where he does most of his work, and wrote a few tentative pages. He saw, to his surprise, that he had turned the villain into a comedy idea. Next day he handed his work to Eldridge, who read the typewritten sheets with growing bewilderment. "What am I supposed to do with this?" he asked.

Clarke said: "Well, would you mind very much if I left *Pool of London* and pinched your villain?" Eldridge talked to producer

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPH BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON



On the set of *Mandy*, Sir Michael Balcon (centre) confers with Alexander Mackendrick, the director, while Terence Morgan chats with Phyllis Calvert

SOME WHO HAVE TAKEN THE BALCON WAY TO STARDOM

JESSIE MATTHEWS . . . given her first big chance on the screen

MADELEINE CARROLL . . . one of the early Balcon discoveries

CLIVE BROOK . . . Hollywood was soon made to hunger for him

Michael Relph about it, and Relph in turn went to Balcon. "There's been a development on *Pool of London*," he said.

"Oh? Is it any good?" Balcon queried.

Then Relph told him what it was. Sir Michael exploded. He called Clarke in. "What's the big idea of all this?" he raged. "Are you running these studios or am I?" But when his temper had cooled a little, Clarke asked him if he had read his outline. "No," Balcon said curtly.

Later, Sir Michael called Clarke in again. "I've been thinking over your idea," he said. "It's a good one. I suggest that you drop *Pool* and go ahead with it." The resulting film was *The Lavender Hill Mob*, which pleased critics and the public wherever it was shown, and was given the prized award by the American Board of Review as the best film script for 1951.

Partly, at least, because of his ability to change his mind when a good idea comes along, Balcon has become—with the possible exception of his fellow film knight, Sir Alexander Korda—Britain's best-known film producer. In thirty years he has made a total of 297 films, including such memorable ones as *Journey's End, Sunshine Susie, The Good Companions, The 39 Steps, A Yank at Oxford*—all prewar—and *San Demetrio —London, The Overlanders, Passport to Pimlico* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* since then. Even more recently, his *Where No Vultures Fly* was honoured by a Royal Command Performance.

A Chance For Hitchcock

Sir Michael has produced his films at home and —by remote control—in faraway places: India, Egypt, Canada, Africa, Australia, Switzerland, Norway and even the frozen Antarctic. In the course of time he has discovered or developed men and women who have since become bright stars and famous directors. Among others, he brought Jessie Matthews to the screen, discovered Madeleine Carroll, made Hollywood hunger for Clive Brook, developed the late Conrad Veidt as an international star, and gave Alfred Hitchcock his chance to become a director. This list, admittedly, includes names which have not shone from cinema screens within the memory of many of today's younger film-goers. As a matter of fact, Balcon has latterly put less emphasis on the need for stars in his films, and no actor is now under long-term contract to Ealing. Yet even then, and in spite of himself, Sir Michael has recently helped to push such people as Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood and Jack Warner along the road to stardom.

In addition, Balcon's direct influence is now felt by at least fifty per cent of the whole output of British films. For, besides being in charge of Ealing's production, he is a director of J. Arthur Rank Productions (and, incidentally, is a director of Odeon Theatres); he is the honorary adviser to the National Film Finance Corporation, a position which enables him to recommend whether certain proposed films should or should not be helped by Government loans; and he is chairman of two Government-sponsored groups of independent producers. No one else in the industry holds such concentrated power. Yet, at times, Balcon seems as out of place in the phrenetic film world as, for example, Sir Laurence Olivier would be in a Marx Brothers film. In a way, Sir Michael agrees. "I must apologize if I don't fit in with the usual conception of a film producer," he remarked recently. "I don't belong to the international set; I'm not a glamour boy; I loathe cigars; I haven't got a swimming pool; I have only been married once. And I am a mass of indecisions."

This collective admission divorces Balcon from the popular view of the cigar-munching, trigger-decisioned, much-married film producer. But the picture of a colourless and prosaic business man which Balcon seems to draw of himself is misleading. A dark but balding, home-loving, bespectacled, mild-looking man in his fifties, Sir Michael is as hard to put a finger on as a globule of mercury.

Jumble Of Contradictions

A close friend, trying to analyse Balcon to a stranger recently, ended up by saying: "He is a jumble of contradictions with certain consistencies running through his complexities." True, the Ealing chief has been cited, inside his own industry, as "a stabilizing influence," and "an influence for good." But it is easy to see why friends and foes despair of classifying him.

While some people have never encountered Balcon except when he seemed a rather shyly nervous and scrupulously polite man, an old-time colleague once compared him to a dynamo. "He can turn on 10,000,000 volts in an instant," this friend reported. "I have seen Mick make Hitchcock cry quarter in the space of five minutes, and reduce Mr. and Mrs. Hulbert to silent assent in fifteen." The Hulberts, of course, are Cicely Courtneidge and her equally famous husband, jut-chinned Jack.

The fact is that Sir Michael, like many other artistically creative people, is not one man but several, and slips from mood to mood a dozen times a day. The producers and directors who work under him at Ealing recognize this, and when they want to put a new idea before him they first approach Miss Winifrid Slater, who has been his secretary for the past twenty years. "How's the mood at the moment?" they ask. Even this precaution is not foolproof. "We take pot luck, even if she gives a favourable reply," an Ealing producer admitted. "Mick's mood can change every quarter of an hour."

On the face of this evidence, Balcon would appear to be a hard man to work with and for, but the reverse is the case. He chooses his creative executives with great care and then loads them with more scope and freedom than is customary in their business. In return, "Mick's boys," as outsiders sometimes call them, give him a warmth of loyalty that, nevertheless, stops

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Lawrence Earl

WHEN Lawrence Earl sets out to prepare a new JOHN BULL series, he always makes sure that he has plenty of blank notebooks. It was his painstaking research which built up his now famous articles *Yangtse Incident*, describing the exploits of H.M.S. *Amethyst*, which appeared in JOHN BULL and were published as a best-selling book. The same relentless fact-gathering produced his present brilliant JOHN BULL series on Britain's great film producer, Sir Michael Balcon.

Earl interviewed scores of people, each of whom contributed his own impressions of Balcon, memories of his career and the anecdotes which illuminate its highlights. He visited Balcon's studios so many times that the guard at the gate began to mistake him for a regular member of the Ealing team.

Two things he quickly learned: Sir Michael was the busiest man he had ever met—and one of the friendliest. They talked in the producer's limed-pine office at Ealing, in his Mayfair flat and at his celebrated Domesday Book country house at Upper Parrock in Sussex. Twelve bulging notebooks later, Earl sat down to write this series.

In his three following articles, he traces the story of Balcon's fantastic merry-go-round of disaster and triumph, his epic battle with the great tsar of Hollywood, Louis B. Mayer, and the tempestuous windmill-tilting which has made him one of the most controversial figures in British films.

JOAN GREENWOOD . . . the star Sir Michael made in spite of himself

How the Balcon influence helps to shape a film. Wearing his overcoat, Sir Michael talks over *Kind Hearts and Coronets* with Alec Guinness and director Robert Hamer

well short of sycophancy. They know that, once he has accepted their ideas, he will fight for them against all comers. Yet Balcon does not necessarily approve of all the films planned at Ealing. "Well, I don't know about that one," he often says, doubtfully, to a producer-director team putting up an idea.

"Well, then," the producer may insist, "can we sit down for three months and develop the idea further?"

"All right," Balcon agrees.

Three months later, if the producer-director team remains keen on the subject, Balcon often gives in—even if he is still cool about it. "Well, I can see you boys won't be any good until you get it out of your system," he says. "Go ahead." And they do. Of course, he just as often says "No," and sticks to it, but on the whole he has an open mind and is not afraid, as some film executives are, of changing it. Once, after he had had a long discussion with Robert Hamer and Michael Truman on an important point of a film they were making, and had made his own views abundantly clear, he started to scribble a memorandum to himself. "I'd better make a note of what I've said," he explained, "in case I change my mind."

Stormy "Balcony" Scenes

About once a month, a meeting is held at Ealing which is attended by producers, directors and heads of certain departments. These meetings take place in the rather cramped directors' dining-room, the main feature of which is a large built-in round table designed by Basil Dean when he was in charge of the studio. In those days, the room was known as the Deanery, but later, when Major Reginald Baker—now Balcon's partner—became Ealing chief, the name was changed to the Bakery. Today, of course, it is the Balcony. This does not mean that Sir Michael has superseded Major Baker at Ealing. "He is finance and administration; I am production," Balcon says.

The round-table meetings are often stormy, as Balcon encourages all who attend them to speak their minds freely, even on films which do not directly concern them. But no rancour is carried out of the room. Subjects for possible future films are tossed back and forth, and films nearing completion are criticized in a singularly uninhibited atmosphere. This latter practice is considered very important at Ealing. "That way you've got a dozen very friendly, very objective and very ruthless critics who have been working together for a long time, each one of whom knows the strengths and weaknesses of all the others," one Ealing director explained. "We all come unstuck at times; but this final refining process may pull a film up from being merely passable to something really good." This method of teamwork has enabled Balcon to evolve a characteristic product, so that, as he puts it with a curious mixture of pride and reticence, "the name of a middle-class London suburb has become a label for a certain type of film."

At these round-table sessions, where many fruitful ideas are born, Balcon does not hesitate to speak his own mind. Not long ago, Harry Watt, the distinguished director of *The Overlanders* and *Where No Vultures Fly*, suggested at a meeting that he would like to make a story unlike the simply plotted outdoor themes of his previous successes. A colleague objected. "That kind of story is out of Harry's line," he said.

Watt defended his suggestion. "I'll admit it's different from anything I've done," he said. "Still, I believe that a good technician can make any kind of picture." Up to that moment, Balcon had been listening quietly. "And what makes you think that you are a good technician?" he interjected sharply. That ended the discussion. Sir Michael, who hates being misunderstood almost as much as he dislikes hurting anybody's feelings, sought Watt out as soon as the meeting broke up.

"Look, Harry," he said, in the shyly engaging way he has at times, "what I meant was that it's silly of you to want to do things like the others. You have the ability to make an outdoor film, all on your own, and can fill the terrible gap left by Flaherty." Balcon could have paid Watt no higher compliment. He was referring to the late Robert Flaherty, who had directed such classics as *Man of Aran* (which Balcon produced) and *Nanook of the North*.

Sir Michael is a man who does not take his responsibilities lightly, and in order to wade through his week's work he sets himself a rigid routine and sticks to it. "He won't do *anything* until he has gone through his mail in the morning," his secretary once commented. He is also likely to snap at anyone who tries to interrupt him then. He reads and deals with his post from shortly before ten until eleven o'clock, during which period he is kept free from telephone calls and other petty annoyances. He has a cup of tea at eleven (and another at four) and at half past eleven he sees rushes of the previous day's filming. It is Miss Slater who makes his tea, and on this point the two have what she calls a "gentlemen's agreement." Some years ago, Balcon often rang the buzzer on his desk for her almost as soon as she had brought in his tea. One day she protested. "It's a bit tough that I should be making tea for others," she said, "and not getting any myself." Balcon sees himself as a reasonable and fair employer. Now, there is a ten-minute truce period after his tea is delivered.

Telephone Tantrums

After an hour divided between viewing in Ealing's private cinema and roaming around the studio floor, where he likes to keep an eye on work in progress, Sir Michael dictates to Miss Slater and, at one o'clock, reluctantly takes an hour off for lunch. Then he piles on the work again. It is during this period that he reveals his personality to be a strange mixture of the patient and the impatient. If, for instance, he cannot get a person on the phone, he often flies off into a momentary tantrum, but in his next breath both temper and telephone are forgotten and he is buried in a fresh problem which evokes a different mood. He usually does not leave his small but pleasant office until some time after six.

For a while, after Sir Michael committed himself to his present duties outside the studio, he let his producers and directors believe

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I struck her hands away from my jacket. "You leave me alone!" I bawled. "And stop calling my father Joe." Then I plunged blindly to the door

The trouble with Spring

by ***DAVID LAMSON***

ILLUSTRATED BY KENNETH WYNNE

I didn't like this woman, with her fancy city ways. And I didn't like her calling dad "Joe"; not with things as they were—with mother away

MY FATHER LOOKED UP at the sun, a pale orange blur in the chill sky. "Pretty near noon," he said. "Better go hot up the beans, Bob."

I said, "All right," and stuck my axe in a poplar stump and started away. Then I stopped. "Listen, Dad, do we have to have beans all the time? Ever since Ma's been gone, nothing but beans. Can't we have something else for a change?"

"Sure. I don't care." He picked up a pole and carried it to the fence. "Boil potatoes and fry some bacon, if you'd rather. Just get a move on, will you?" He held the rail to a post, braced with his leg, and began to nail it. The nail bent. He swore, and yanked it out, and started another.

I trudged on to the house. The kitchen was cold and had a stale, frowsty smell, and when I lit the fire the stove smoked a while, until it worked up enough draught to lift the cold air in the chimney. I stood looking at the white smoke coil out around the stove lids, and felt very depressed and discouraged.

It wasn't just the beans, or dad being so cranky; it was everything—mother being gone, most of all. She had been away about a month then, and nothing was right with her not there. Though nothing had been right for some time before she left, either. We'd had a rough old winter, with temperatures down to sixty below and snow deeper than usual, so we couldn't get out much. By February we had little left to say to each other; we would go all day without a dozen words between us. But sometimes, late at night, I would wake up and hear them talking in their room next to mine. I didn't try to hear what they said. I knew something was wrong but I didn't want to know it; it was better not to know, not to be sure.

So when mother said her sister was ill and needed her, out in Vancouver, I pretended to believe her. "Can't I go with you?" I said.

"No," mother said, speaking with her back to me so that I couldn't see her face. "You stay here with your father, for the present."

"I'd rather go with you. Why can't I?"

"Because you can't. Later on I may send for you. It . . . depends."

"What's it depend on?"

"Oh . . . a lot of things. What I decide to . . . Bob, stop pestering me. Go away and let me pack."

It was sad and strange, having her gone; she never had been away before, more than overnight. Father was more silent than ever. He didn't like to have me talk about mother, or ask questions about her.

At first I tried to pretend it was fun to be batching with father; I pretended we were trappers, or cowboys holed up in a line camp miles from anywhere. But what was the use pretending? The fact is we were farmers, on a grubby little homestead in the Alberta woods country of Canada, doing the hard, dirty tasks farmers have to do in early spring—mucking out

corrals and cowyards, mending fences, cleaning up after winter.

That is a miserable time of year, anyway, between winter and spring—the weather facing both ways, rain one minute and snow the next; mud everywhere you step, and everything you touch wet and clammy; your feet are wet all the time and your lips get chapped and your hands are cracked and sore, and no comfort anywhere. Nothing but hard work and beans. And mother away.

I wished with all my heart that mother would come home, or send for me, or that something would happen. Anything. But then when something did happen, I didn't like that either.

It might have been that same afternoon, or a day or so later; we were taking the mowing machine to pieces, I remember, and a wrench slipped and barked my knuckles. I wasn't hurt much, but I blew up and said a lot of words I wasn't supposed to.

"Here, calm down!" father said. "What's the matter with you?"

"I'm sick of all this!" I yelled. "I'm sick of rain and mud and cold and work all the time! I'm darned sick of it, that's all!"

Father looked thoughtfully at the barns and sheds and muddy yard. "You know," he said, "so am I. Let's do something about it. Go make a fire and heat some water and get cleaned up, and we'll go to town."

"To town!" I gasped. "On Wednesday? What for?"

"Oh, just for a change. Get away from this hole for a while."

"Well, I . . . my gosh. All right. Only what about the milking?"

"We'll milk early for once." He looked at our five cows gazing at us morosely from the cowyard. "Cows are a nuisance," he said. "I've got a notion to get rid of 'em."

I supposed he was just talking and paid no attention. "What about supper?" I asked. "Will we eat before we go or——"

"We'll eat in town," he said, "at the hotel."

That really threw me. People in our country either ate at home, or took sandwiches, or stopped at a friend's house and waited to be asked to a meal. Restaurants were for travellers, for strangers, for those who had no homes. The whole thing was upsetting, for that matter—father's wanting a change, his being willing to quit work in mid-afternoon and go traipsing off to town, him speaking of the homestead as a "hole," his complaint about the cows. It was all right for me to feel that way, but he wasn't supposed to. It was his homestead, so naturally he didn't mind working on it. Besides, he was old (he was in his middle thirties) and he was my father. Everyone knew fathers worked all the time because they liked to and young people like me worked because their parents made them, and did as little as possible. That was the natural order of things.

Now all at once the natural order seemed to be shifting. Of course I was excited to be going to town dressed up in the middle of the week and eating supper at the hotel. But I couldn't help being a little alarmed about it, too.

The town was new then, built less than a year before, when the railroad came through. It stood in a clearing on the east bank of the Saskatchewan River, four miles from our place. There was a single street, wide enough to turn a team and wagon, with eight or ten business buildings scattered along it and about twice as many dwellings.

The Imperial Hotel was the grandest building of all; it was two storeys high and the front was covered with sheets of tin pressed to look like stone, and painted red. The lobby had a real plate-glass window and was furnished with golden oak chairs and a leather sofa and a small artificial palm. A large picture of King Edward VII hung over the desk. The dining-room was a long, narrow room off the lobby, with a long and narrow pine-plank table covered with checked oilcloth. A man named Hankins ran the hotel; his wife did the cooking and his daughter waited at table. She was a fat, unhappy looking girl, and she didn't seem at all pleased to see father and me come in. I guess she had thought she was finished serving supper. Only three people were left in the dining-room—Mr. Conroy, the druggist, who boarded at the hotel, and a man and woman, strangers. They sat together at the far end of the table.

We took places at the centre. Mr. Conroy looked over at us and nodded and then said something to the couple with him—something about us, I felt sure. I turned red to the ears and stared hard at my hands.

The Hankins girl came to us, scowling. "There's hash," she said. "That's all we got left, hash"—hoping we'd turn down the hash, and go away.

Father leaned back and grinned at her. "How

I could think of only one way to convince her Turk was dangerous. I shinned up on his back

about eggs?" he said. "Bob and me, we're hungry for eggs. We haven't seen any eggs in months and months. You got eggs?"

"Well, yes, maybe. I guess so," she said grudgingly.

"Then that's what we'll have. Ham and eggs. Straight up. Four apiece."

"Four?" she said, incredulous. "You mean, four eggs—apiece?"

"No," said father, "on second thoughts, make it six. Six for him, six for me. You see, sister, when we eat eggs we don't fool around. We eat a whole lot of eggs."

She glared at him as if it were some kind of crime to want more than two eggs at a helping. Then she went flouncing out to the kitchen.

The two strangers and Mr. Conroy heard all this and they were laughing. Father grinned at them and winked. But I was embarrassed half to death, and furious with father for squabbling with the waitress, and making a show of himself in a public place. I thought that was a terrible way to act. I was ashamed to be with him; I wanted to sink through the floor. And at the same time I was furious with the people, too, for laughing at him.

A minute later the three left the table. Mr. Conroy paused beside us on his way to the lobby. "Looks like you and the boy are out on a spree, Mr. Plimpton."

"Call it that," father said. "My wife's away visiting, and Bob and I decided we couldn't stand our own cooking any longer."

"A meal or two at Heartburn House will get you over that," said Mr. Conroy. He rolled his cigar between his white fingers in an elegant, citified way. "After six months here, I'm at the point where I've either got to get married, or take cooking lessons."

"Better do both and play safe," said father. "I'm married, and look where I am."

They laughed and Mr. Conroy clapped father on the shoulder familiarly. "I'll see you in the lobby," he said, "when you're through eating eggs. Those people I was with—the Otwells—I want you to meet them."

"Otwell," father repeated. "He the government man?"

"That's right. With the land office. They'll only be here a month or two, so they're staying at the hotel, heaven help them. This is Mrs. Otwell's first time out West, and she's curious about it. Maybe you can tell her about homesteading."

So that is how we happened to meet the Otwells—all on account of those eggs. For we were not well acquainted with Mr. Conroy; we knew who he was from being in his store a few times. But except for the egg business it would never have occurred to him to stop and talk to father and introduce him to his friends. We would have eaten supper and gone on home. And saved a whole lot of trouble if we had.

Mr. Otwell was a clerkish, inconspicuous man who wore glasses and a high starched collar and a pinched, painful smile in between them. His wife was the one who took your attention. She was about thirty, slender and graceful, with a thin, sensitive face, a neat nose, large amber-coloured eyes beneath heavy brows, and a mass of fair hair piled high on her head. I realize now that she was an uncommonly attractive woman, but I disliked her intensely at the time.

I disliked her because she was a stranger and I was shy of strangers; and because she had laughed at us (as I thought) about the eggs. No doubt, too, I resented her poised, elegant manner, which made me feel inferior and uncouth. And when father introduced us she barely glanced at me—or through me—and murmured something vaguely. No one likes being ignored.

She turned at once to father. "Mr. Plimpton," she said, "I understand you were one of the first settlers in this region. Do tell us some of your experiences, won't you?"

Father was not at all awed by strangers. He believed one man was as good as another, if not better, and he was at ease in any company. He loved spinning yarns, too, especially to tenderfeet. So he told them about the West—about homesteading, and stories from the time when he was a cowboy down in Montana in the United States. He began with true things and then piled it on thicker and thicker until he was unreeling some real whoppers. They loved it—Mrs. Otwell, especially. She was fascinated. She laughed until she cried, and begged for more.

But I had heard all his stories. I stood around on one foot a while and then went over in the corner and looked at a magazine—an English illustrated magazine, full of kings and duchesses and earls holding teacups or shotguns, or sitting on horses or in motor cars. I grew ever more resentful of Mrs. Otwell's loud laughter; I wished father wouldn't play the clown like that. Once, peering balefully from behind my magazine, I saw her lean over, helpless with laughter, and catch hold of father's forearm. The gesture offended me deeply; I didn't know why.

And I remember looking at father and realizing suddenly that he was quite a handsome man. The idea shocked me. Never before had it occurred to me to judge his appearance; he was my father, handsome or unhandsome, and how he looked didn't matter. Now I was seeing him as someone apart from me, as a person in his own right—as Joseph R. Plimpton, not simply

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SURVIVAL after Death

My wife "writes" to me through a medium

by REGINALD M. LESTER

ONE MORNING about five or six weeks after my wife's death, before I had actually gone very far in my investigations into spiritualist phenomena, I sat down to breakfast and picked up the post to find a letter in what appeared to be her own handwriting. For a moment I looked round the familiar room in astonishment, wondering if I had suddenly "passed over" myself without realizing it! Then I pulled myself together and opened the envelope.

There was a covering letter inside from a woman in Surrey, an acquaintance whom I had met only once.

The covering letter told me that on the previous evening, when sitting at her writing table, this friend had suddenly been "controlled," which she said meant that her hand had been guided and she had found herself writing the enclosed four-page letter to me. I must add that she had never known my wife, had never seen her writing and knew nothing whatever about her.

Yet the "controlled" letter amazed me. Apart from the remarkable similarity of the writing—and my wife had a very distinctive hand—the phrasing was wholly like hers, and the letter, which dealt with purely personal matters, began in her "special" way: an unusual opening she had always used, and which could not have been known to a stranger.

This remarkable experience made me decide to find out all I could about automatic writing, as it is called. I realized fully that there were obvious dangers in this method: that the personality of the medium, as in clairvoyance, might "colour" the messages, and that the whole business might be subject to interference or even fabrication. I determined to try it, nevertheless.

When I at last found the time, I sought a suitable medium and was lucky enough to be put in touch with Helen Standing, who, I was told, in addition to being a good clairvoyant was skilled in receiving communications through automatic writing.

My first sitting took place early in March, 1950, at a time when I wanted guidance on a

Lester watches Helen Standing's "automatic" writing. An extract from a message set down by Mrs. Standing is reproduced below. This is the fifth of Lester's articles describing his personal investigation of spiritualism

personal matter. We sat in a pleasantly sunny room in Mrs. Standing's home in North London, with an immense sheet of paper (about the size of a roll of wallpaper) on the table before us. I thought this looked optimistic, but before the end of the sitting the whole of the sheet was filled on both sides with writing!

After a short prayer, asking for help and guidance, Mrs. Standing took up the pencil and held it lightly in her right hand, just touching the paper. In a few seconds the pencil began to move and started making a series of up and down strokes, much more rapidly than in ordinary writing. This went on for a couple of lines across the sheet; then there was a slight pause and the pencil went on, the seemingly aimless strokes beginning to form some sort of lettering. This quickly developed into actual words and I read in a big, scrawling hand, quite unlike my wife's—her name, repeated two or three times: Margery, Margery, Margery. (This was a form of spelling she had never used, but it was to be explained later.)

Then the writing continued: "How do you do this? Reg, dear, this is a new medium."

I said this was a splendid start and asked if the sound of my voice would help. This produced a further written sentence: "Yes. Give me some help, please."

I spoke again, and the speed of the pencil increased as the writing went on: "I am so excited and happy. Do you know I have been here all day? There are ever so many people watching. Yes, all around me. Keep on trying."

Again I said something, and the writing continued: "I think I like this method. Dear, you are so good to have so much patience. Always the same. Take care of yourself."

I asked some questions of a personal nature that brought accurate and convincing replies.

Later in the sitting, I recorded the following "dialogue":

MARJORIE (writing): Please, get my ring made to fit you better. I am so afraid you are going to lose it. (This referred to Marjorie's wedding ring, which I had had enlarged so that I could wear it on my own finger. I had got into the habit of twisting the ring round my little finger when I was alone.)

SELF (speaking): I don't follow you, dear. You know I had it altered and it fits my little finger perfectly.

MARJORIE: Well, why do you keep twisting it around?

SELF: Oh, fancy you noticing that! Yes, I am always twisting it around, half unconsciously, but probably because it gives me the feeling of something so precious of yours.

MARJORIE: One day, dear, I am going to ask for it back. And also my pearls. When you come over to me. (Her pearls were the only personal possessions I had kept; at her request everything else had been given away to friends.)

This sitting lasted more than an hour, and the writing covered many sheets. The next automatic

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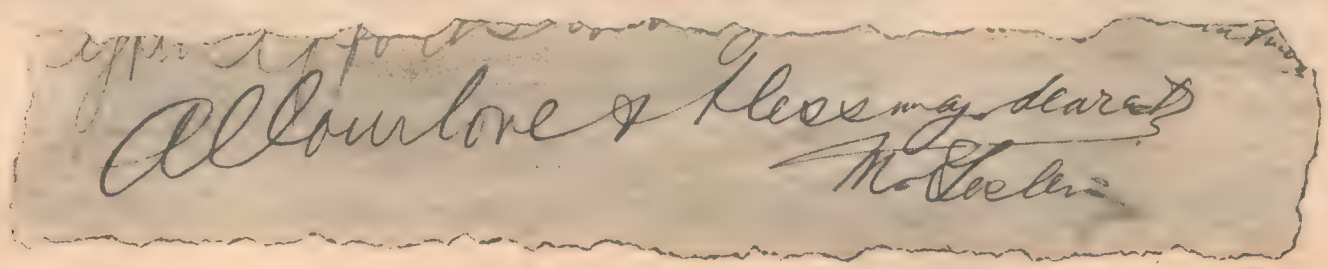

Amid the smoke and flames the private battle raged. Phoebe hovered behind Derrick as the two men came together, lunging, vaulting and stabbing

Dark Conspiracy

by JANE LANE

ILLUSTRATED BY KOOLMAN

Phoebe ignored the frantic crowds around her. She had eyes only for the two swordsmen duelling in the street: her sweetheart was fighting for his life

DERRICK CALDER, an ex-gentleman usher in the Duke of York's service, had left his job at Court after trying to expose a plot against King Charles II. The Lord Chamberlain, to whom he brought the story, had heard too much of plots in the last few years. But it was not the Chamberlain's disinterest alone that had caused Derrick to leave. Shortly after his abortive interview, he had learned that his sweetheart, Phoebe, had been abducted by the plotters. He set out to find her. . . .

The Rye House, in Hertfordshire, where Phoebe was held prisoner, was a high-walled and closely guarded malting-house. At first, escape seemed impossible. But the resourceful Phoebe, concocting a sleeping draught from herbs picked in the kitchen garden, administered it one night to her fearsome jailer, Rumbold the maltster. Then, seizing the drugged man's keys, she fled for the safety of the nearest town, Bishop's Stortford.

Unknown to Phoebe, Derrick had arrived in Bishop's Stortford the previous night, searching for her. He had no idea how close he was to finding her until, next morning, catching a ragged-looking girl trying to steal his horse, he recognized her as Phoebe. She had a desperate story to tell. The men in the Rye House had been given the job of killing the king. The royal party, now attending Newmarket races, would be ambushed at the Rye House on the way back to London.

Urgently, Derrick and Phoebe rode to Newmarket. Desperation encouraged them to draw near to the royal entourage and try to warn the King personally. But again Derrick was rebuffed by Court officials.

Sick at heart, they went off to find lodgings for the night.

FINAL INSTALMENT

The Duel

THE first grey light was beginning to creep through the window of her bedchamber when Phoebe woke and could not sleep again. She dressed presently and went downstairs and opened the door leading into the courtyard—and caught her breath as a strong gust of wind buffeted her in the face. Her nostrils twitched suspiciously. Surely there was a strange smell abroad? She slipped into the yard and sniffed again, and then ran across to the ladder that led to the loft where Derrick slept. Picking her way through the snoring men in the straw, she reached Derrick and shook him by the arm.

"There's an evil stink abroad that I like not," she whispered.

Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Derrick followed her down the ladder. He was still not properly awake, but at the first breath of the morning wind his eyes widened.

"It smells like the reek of burning," he said uneasily. They opened the hatch door and stepped out into the main street.

Newmarket still slept, but a thick column of smoke rose from the roofs at the back of the town, in the direction of the royal stables. Together they began hurrying towards it.

As they ran they banged upon the house doors, shouting "Fire! Fire!" so that by the time they reached the stables, casements were flung open, alarmed voices demanded to know what was to-do, and here and there figures appeared, in shifts and nightgowns, with cloaks hastily flung over their shoulders, beginning to form a small, panic-stricken crowd. And all the

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Britain will be a smaller place when Reggie Brie's dream comes true. The helicopter —"the missing link"— will lop hours off schedules by whisking passengers . . .

From city to city over the rooftops

by KEITH ELLIS

SCRAMBLING OUT OF HIS PLANE at London Airport, the business man realized that he had only two hours to reach Birmingham for an important conference. He hurried over to the Customs hall. Officials insisted on a thorough inspection of his baggage. "It will take me an hour to get to Victoria by coach," he chafed, "twenty minutes by tube from Victoria to Euston, and two hours by train from Euston to Birmingham—if there's a train due. I'll never make it."

While immigration authorities checked his passport, porters stowed his luggage in the boot of the coach. "You don't go to London via Birmingham, do you?" he said jokingly to the driver as he climbed in. The driver shook his head, but said: "If you're in a hurry, I think there's a helicopter waiting to leave for Birmingham." There was indeed. The business man's luggage was transferred and, an hour later, he stepped on to the tarmac of the Hay Mills rotor station, Birmingham, well in time for his conference.

The machine which carried him belonged to the British European Airways helicopter experimental unit, whose work culminated last June in the opening of a daylight experimental passenger service between Birmingham and Northolt and London airports. Since everything possible has been learned from the experiment, a freight service was recently substituted so that experiments in instrument flying could be attempted.

"The helicopter is the missing link in our transport system," says Wing Commander Reggie Brie, official in charge of the unit, who "sells" the helicopter as glibly as a prospector who has struck a mine. Stocky, middle-aged his grizzled moustache matching the grey of his crisp, wavy hair, he combines the ruthlessness of the service officer with the quiet persuasiveness of the business man. "We're Jekyll and Hyde," he says; "operational and experimental at the same time. Every step is a build-up of know-how. We're willing to earn revenue—provided it doesn't interfere with our experiments."

Leonardo Da Vinci's Idea

Without benefit of mass production, the helicopter is not yet economic, but is on the verge of becoming so. Although the basic idea dates back to Leonardo da Vinci, it was only in 1937 that German designers produced a helicopter that would fly backwards, forwards and sideways, ascend vertically, and hover. Both this and the British auto-gyro were held up by the war. Research went on in America, however, and in 1941 Igor Sikorsky produced the prototype of the machines used by B.E.A. on the London-Birmingham run.

Foreseeing a useful future for the helicopter, B.E.A. set up the experimental unit in 1947 to find out what the helicopter could do and how best it could do it. Techniques of landing, take-off, navigation and blind flying had to be mastered.

All the original members of the unit had previous experience of helicopters. Brie, the first pilot ever to have his licence endorsed for helicopter flying, spent much of his time in the R.A.F. applying the new American machines to wartime needs. Captain John Theilmann, thirty-nine year old chief pilot of the unit, joined an R.A.F. helicopter unit in 1944. Jock Nelson, the young out-station engineer, worked with Brie during the war.

Though Brie is always interested in new uses for the helicopter, he has strictly avoided stunts. "They don't further our real cause," he says. "They attract attention and, if they go wrong, get us bad publicity." Though strong pressure was applied, he decided not to allow a landing at the Festival Pleasure Gardens.

The suitability of the helicopter for stunts of all kinds has, however, proved irresistible to private operators in Britain and abroad. To celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany in 1949 a helicopter disguised as *La Befana*, the Italian Santa Claus, landed in front of Milan Cathedral and proceeded to distribute gifts to the poor children of the neighbourhood. At the French national air pageant, three helicopters under the direction of Serge Lifar performed an aerial ballet.

Captain Theilmann watches passengers embark for the flight from Birmingham to London

Apart from stunts, the helicopter has proved itself in all sorts of practical uses. Typical of hundreds of successful rescues was that in which the sole survivor of a fishing boat which capsized in heavy surf off the Californian coast managed to grab a rope lowered by helicopter. A building contractor in the United States found that the quickest and cheapest way of hoisting a steeple weighing just under a ton on to a new church was by helicopter.

This capacity for saving time was well demonstrated by the East Anglian mail-run operated by the B.E.A. unit in 1948. The unit had bought five American helicopters, two Bells for training and three Sikorsky 51s which, after exhaustive tests, became the first helicopters licensed for commercial use. "But we were still pioneering," says Brie. "We decided we could take risks with mailbags which we weren't then ready to take with human beings."

On Time To The Minute

After the unit had satisfied the Post Office of its reliability by a dummy mail run in Dorset, a four months' contract was granted for a daily mail service in East Anglia. Starting from Westwood Airfield, near Peterborough, the pilot on duty delivered mails to ordinary fields.

"We were on time to the minute," says Theilmann. "I once met a man in Peterborough who lived between Thetford and Diss. 'I'll be sorry when you pack up,' he said. 'My wife puts on the potatoes when she hears you go over between 12.3 and 12.4.' We attained a reliability of ninety-seven per cent. There were no mechanical failures. The only time we failed to deliver was during fog."

The Post Office next asked for a demonstration of mail-flying by night, when the big shift of mail takes place. So far, helicopters were licensed for daytime flying only. After many experiments a navigational aid was built in, and an instrument flying licence obtained.

After reliability had been proved with a dummy mail run, the Post Office granted a six months' contract for a nightly run from Peterborough to Norwich. By careful timing and the use of connecting vans, letters written in the evening in Yarmouth were delivered in Glasgow by the first post next morning.

"It was damned hard work," says Theilmann. "The helicopter is fundamentally unstable. You can't leave it alone for a second. You have to 'fly' it all the way." Even with the additional difficulty of flying on instruments, they achieved a regularity of 84.7 per cent, and flew in weather that would have grounded fixed-wing aircraft. Altogether they carried 97,000 lb. of mail.

The unit's next experiment was a scheduled

B.E.A. pilot prepares to start. At £4 10s. from London to Birmingham and back, the service did not pay its way—but it provided valuable experience for the future

Mrs. Theilmann and her children gaze up as a helicopter returns to Birmingham

passenger service from Liverpool to Cardiff. The pilots were moved to Liverpool, and it was this move, coming after service in Yeovil and Peterborough, which drove Theilmann, and eventually the other married pilots, to solve the housing problem by buying caravans. Theilmann has two caravans. One, with a small but well-equipped kitchen partitioned off at one end, is his lounge-cum-dining-room, convertible at night into a bedroom for himself and his wife, Joan. The other is used as a nursery for Tim, aged three, and Jo, aged four.

From summer, 1950, to spring, 1951, Theilmann and the other pilots flew from Liverpool to Cardiff and back—two flights a day. Although the helicopters flew their three passengers at a little under a hundred miles an hour, the total time, including road journeys to and from the airports at each end, was two hours, as compared with five hours by rail. The helicopter fare was £5 10s. return: the first-class rail equivalent was £3 5s. 11d.

By spring, 1951, Brie reckoned that the unit had learned all it could from this experiment. The next was to be a scheduled service from Birmingham to London and Northolt airports. "It was really a 'feeder' service for London Airport," he says. "We hoped to learn from this how to integrate helicopters with fast-flying aircraft in the control system of an international airport, and how to operate a rotor-station."

The first question was quickly solved. The helicopter usually flies at 1,000 feet, well below the usual height of air liners. Instead of ordering it to join a "stack" of fixed-wing planes circling at regulated heights, the airport controller tells the pilot to hover or put down at a small drome nearby. The longest time a helicopter has so far had to wait is eight minutes.

After inspecting various sites on the south-east side of Birmingham, Brie chose for his rotor-station a playing-field area at Hay Mills, three miles from the centre of the city. A slightly sloping piece of land, 250 feet by 230 feet, was enclosed with wooden railings and grassed over. A green hut was built, containing a passenger lounge, reception desk, telephone and weighing machine for luggage. The whole thing was much smaller than most bus stations. "One of the helicopter's advantages is that you don't need an expensive airport," says Brie.

To find out what passengers thought about the service, a comments card was placed on each seat. Most comments dealt with the tilt of the seats, noise and occasional draughts. "We shall pass this information to the makers when we place future orders," says Brie. "Of course, the service was not meant to pay its way. It could not, at £4 10s. return. We were just gaining experience for the future."

Surveying From The Air

Besides passengers, the helicopters have flown freight, both on the service and on other occasions. "We want to earn revenue, but not at the expense of our experiments." They have carried pearls from Kobe in Japan, motor car spare parts, and a consignment of cortisone urgently required by a Birmingham hospital.

Recently the British Electricity Authority wished to survey the country between Liverpool and Bangor for a new power line. The country was so rough that the surveyor estimated it would take him two months on foot. Sitting in a helicopter with a six-inch map on his knee, it took only two hours. "It was a rough day," says Theilmann. "We bobbed about like a cork in a whirlpool."

The unit's biggest charter job to date was in the repair of a leaking dam of the Llyn Cwm y Foel reservoir near Portmadoc. The Croessor Dam, as it is called, is separated by three-quarters of a mile of steep and rocky hillside from the nearest road. A helicopter was chartered to lift thirty tons of sand and cement and two tons of machinery from a road-side field in the Croessor Valley to the dam wall, one and a half miles away and 900 feet above.

The first pilot assigned to the job carried the materials in a sling under the helicopter. Unfortunately he crashed, and though he himself escaped, his machine had to be written off. Theilmann took his place and decided it would be safer to carry the stuff inside the helicopter, six hundredweights at a time.

Every morning, he took off from the airfield of a holiday camp at Pwllheli, flew to the valley and breakfasted on ham and eggs or a couple of fresh river trout at a nearby cottage. After his helicopter had been loaded, he flew up the Croessor Valley, turned off at right angles into another valley, dropped his load at the dam and flew straight back for another. The round trip, including loading and unloading, took only seven minutes. Inside one month, all the material had been carried up and the crashed helicopter evacuated. "The only other way they could have done it was by mule train," says Theilmann.

The crash at Croessor is the only serious mishap experienced by the unit. The Birmingham–London service once made a forced landing, but the only damage was to one of the landing wheels. The passengers were so little affected that one of them, a journalist, anxious to get the story to his newspaper, reached the nearest telephone box well before the pilot, who wanted to report the crash.

An engine failure in a helicopter is not nearly

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MEDAL FOR A MURDERER

Concluding a two-part story

by KEM BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

Madeleine, stricken with grief, had only one purpose: to save her lover from the ghastly trap she had set

THE NIGHTMARISH JOB Commandant Yves Garnier had to do during the war left him with a chest full of medals and a heart full of bitterness. For years he had shunned all human contacts, until, meeting Madeleine Loudiac in Paris, he fell in love.

When he arranged to visit her parents before their marriage, he did not realize that Madeleine had recognized him as Martin Pontécoulant, a hated and notorious wartime collaborator of her native town of Quimper.

In Quimper, Madeleine denounced him to Charles Robin, a former Resistance leader. It was not until next morning, when, finding Yves had gone out fishing, she saw a letter he had left her, that she realized he might be innocent.

Obeying the terms of the letter, Madeleine telephoned a number in London—to learn that, as Pontécoulant, Yves had played a double rôle in the service of the Free French. Stricken with grief, she rushed out to try to warn him.

YVES was sitting in the sunshine in the bows of the *Princesse de l'Odet,* examining the harpoon guns which they were to use on the fish at the Iles de Glénaans. He laid the gun down and stared towards the horizon. Madeleine was in his thoughts, lifting his spirit to an unfamiliar happiness. As the bow wave splashed rhythmically against the side of the boat he whispered her name repeatedly in time with the gentle noise, feeling love within him as a warmth, an excitement and a surpassing tenderness.

Presently he was interrupted. "Yves!" It was Jean Loudiac, Madeleine's brother, standing on the swaying deck behind him. "Will you come aft? I want to introduce you to some friends."

Yves clambered to his feet, smiling, his beard looking unusually natural and fitting against the blue of the fisherman's jersey he was wearing. But he was puzzled. Friends?

There was a small cabin on the boat, hidden beneath the deck, aft of the wheelhouse. While Yves was rising, a short man of about fifty, dressed in a plain business man's suit, had climbed out of the companionway. He looked towards Yves, meeting his eyes with a direct, calculating gaze.

Yves turned. Jean Loudiac, too, was watching.

"Well, Pontécoulant," Jean Loudiac said, harsh-voiced with loathing, "how do you like Brittany after your long absence?"

Yves did not answer.

Loudiac took him by the arm and led him towards the stern of the vessel. The five passengers, four men and one middle-aged woman, were sitting in a row on the seat which was attached to the stern-rail. They were there to sit in judgment and were grim in the knowledge of it.

"These are five old friends whom you do not know," Jean Loudiac said. "Le Guen, Donnart, Madame Guillou, Bourhis, Duvien." He turned to gesture towards the man in the business suit and to two other men who had climbed out of the cabin, saying, "On the other hand, I need not introduce Charles Robin, whom we knew as Absalom, or Aguiree, or de l'Helgouach; sit down."

Yves remained standing. His wartime wariness of expression had returned. He held himself with the rigidity of an animal threatened with danger.

Robin was a squat man with an abrupt manner. As Absalom, Yves knew, he had been the leader of the Resistance movement for the whole of Finistère. He now took over command of the situation from Jean Loudiac.

"Are you Martin Pontécoulant, known as Yves Garnier?" he asked.

Yves did not reply. Waves of cold detestation came to him from the eyes of his judges and he knew that he was already condemned in their minds. He had no doubt what their condemnation would mean. Resistance to the German invaders of France would have taught them unscrupulousness as well as the virtues of courage and honour and fidelity. They would kill him if they found him guilty—and he *was* guilty, in a sense.

Self-preservation is a strong instinct. Knowing that he had no credible defence, in the absence of a witness to support his statements, Yves saw his own death waiting for him, and he acted abruptly without pausing to examine his impulses. He went over the side of the motor boat in a scrambling dive, starting to swim even before he hit the water.

IT was deep water—green and cold. With his arms churning the water away from him and his legs impeded by trousers and tennis shoes, kicking desperately, Yves glanced in the direction of the mainland. The coast was a low blur on the skyline. Too far. They would put the boat about and catch him within minutes. He stared round, searching desperately for a yacht or a fishing boat which might be near enough to pick him up. Nothing—nothing within half a mile. A sail, white and tranquil, lay far away to the right, but too far to be of any use to him. He swam even harder, with desperation driving him on.

A few moments later he heard the chugging of the *Princesse de l'Odet's* engine coming up behind him; then, sudden and inexplicable, a blinding pain caught him in the right shoulder.

Madeleine, breaking away from the man at her

On the deck of the *Princesse de l'Odet,* Jean Loudiac held the harpoon gun firmly in his left hand and started to wind in the line attached to the harpoon embedded in Yves's shoulder. Yves had stopped swimming. As the line, thin but strong enough to take the strain of a big fish fighting for its life, tightened, ferocious pain cut into his body. He turned and swam awkwardly with one arm in the direction of the boat, trying to take the tension off the line. They helped him aboard, and he subsided on the seat beside the gunwale. He was exhausted and pitiable, with the blood from his wound darkening the blue wool of his jersey.

The man called Donnart came over with a

side, flung herself down by the figure on the straw and took up his head in her hands. "Yves! Yves!" she cried, "will you ever forgive me?"

knife in his hand to cut away the jersey. "I am a doctor," he said. "I had better take this out, I warn you it will be painful." The voice was cold and impersonal. Yves nodded.

The harpoon came out presently. It was small and had not penetrated deeply, but it was barbed and its removal caused Yves pain that he had never known to exist. After Donnart had bound up the wound with a piece of cloth provided by François, the helmsman, Jean Loudiac fetched brandy from the cabin.

"Drink this, Pontécoulant," he said. "You need not have taken a harpoon in the shoulder. You can't expect us to postpone what we mean to do for something that was your own stupid fault. All the same, you're going to be tried, and we'd sooner have you sensible of what's happening, so if you want to rest we'll give you half an hour."

Yves drank the brandy and leaned back against a stanchion supporting the canopy above him. He looked again into the faces of his judges. They were the same—grave, calm, with only the eyes revealing hatred. He might never have dived overboard; might never have been wounded and in agony. In their minds he was beyond pity. Fatalism prompted him. What had to be, had to be. He felt too cold, too weary and too miserable to fight—even for his life.

"Get on with it," he said bitterly. "Get it over."

The man known as Absalom had been sitting on the skylight above the engine-room. Now he rose. "Are you Martin Pontécoulant, known as Yves Garnier?" he asked for the second time.

"I am Yves Garnier, once known as Pontécoulant."

"Good enough." Absalom took a folded document from his breast pocket and started to read:

"Martin Pontécoulant, you are charged with treason against the Republic of France. You are further charged with the betrayal, torture, imprisonment and murder of Eugène Pariselle, Marie Stepannou, Roger Cornec, Jules Savy, Cécilie Jarnion. . . ."

The voice went on, a voice of authority which was at odds with the stumpy plumpness of its owner. Name after name was uttered with a pompous clarity of diction which increased the

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Flight from Barnawartha, doomed Australian village. A family leave with everything they can carry—their dog, a puppy, bundles of clothes

How we fought the great bush fire

by COLIN PROSSER

This is what it means when a white-hot holocaust sweeps across the land, and towns are wiped out in five minutes

VICTORIA, Australia

ON A HOT DECEMBER DAY last year, C. A. Daw, chief officer of the Country Fire Authority of the State of Victoria, leaned back in a chair in his stuffy Melbourne office and looked grimly at the reporters waiting for a statement. Lightning played around in a dull sky outside as he said quietly: "The fire risk is bad again. We are sitting on a bomb that's likely to explode any minute."

That day, Daw appealed through the Australian newspapers for people not to drop careless matches or cigarette butts, and to put a stop to the devastating fires which had swept through the Australian countryside nearly every four years since the first in 1851. Wearily, he said: "All these bush fires are man-made."

The Federal and State Governments were behind Daw, although many said that legislation was useless, and forecast that the fires in which 123 people had been killed "last time" would happen again. But the Governments had ruled that people could be fined £100 and jailed for two years for lighting fires in open country. The National Safety Council of Australia bought radio time and Press space to ask people to be careful with matches. The Forestry Commission burnt wide tracks through the Australian mountain regions so that, if fire did break out, it could not travel so quickly.

Daw, on that hot, humid December day, summed up like this: "The countryside of Australia, particularly after a heavy winter rain, becomes tinder-dry grass during the following hot summer. It is highly inflammable, and only the six major cities and the barren dead-heart of Central Australia are really secure. We could control a fire outbreak if there were no wind, but if a strong wind developed, there would be a bush fire impossible to stop."

His organization was near perfect that day. He wanted only public co-operation to avoid a fire outbreak. But towards the end of January, 1952, someone dropped a lighted match, or carelessly threw away a lighted cigarette butt. Others, in other parts of the country, did the same. Soon the country was ablaze.

Across the big Australian bush homestead at Jingellic, New South Wales, there was death in the air from early morning on Friday, January 25. Sarah Dunn, a tough, wizened grandmother, felt the soft, warm touch of the hot northerly wind on her cheek when she went outside to bring in a water-bag. She looked apprehensively across at the 1,480 acres of parched grass to the south west, and noted keenly how the high humidity of the morning had forced even some of the horses to lie down.

"Hell, man!" she said to her son, Harry, who was saddling the station's chestnut mare, "the whole country will be ablaze if someone drops a spark today."

"It's not that bad," he said uneasily.

"It's every bit that bad. Now just you listen to me. . . ." For the old woman, born in the

Australian outback, knew her bush fires. One of the 200 emergency "nurses," she had been right in the heart of the Victorian bush fire of 1939; had seen most of the seventy-two people who died, and had helped to care for more than 400 others who were trapped and burned inside their homes. The old woman, too, had seen the 1944 fires in Victoria's western district, when fifty-one people lost their lives in a few hours.

"This is real fire weather," she said testily to her son. "You'd better get the cattle to the river and the kids away to some safe place." Henry Dunn did not act on her warning for twenty-four hours. By that time the rooftop of Australia was ablaze, as a mighty forest fire roared through the Australian Alps.

Nothing Could Survive

Not forty miles from the Dunn's property, a holocaust of white-hot fire moved on and on towards them, irresistibly leaping from ridge to ridge, fence to fence, property to property, ravaging the forests, laying bare thousands of acres of wheat lands, transforming majestic trees from soft, green beauty into stark, black, charred ugliness, and leaving behind a trail of death, despair and desolation. No form of growth survived the furnace heat of the blaze.

That night, from their battery radio set, the Dunns heard the news that thousands heard: "Eight people have already died. Two teenage sisters and five other people are reported missing, believed burned. And more than £3,000,000 worth of damage has been done to properties in north-east Victoria and the Riverina district of New South Wales. The strong north wind is not expected to drop in the next twenty-hour hours. Talmalmo, Tintaldra, Mannus, Towong and Jingellic are threatened."

The announcer then proceeded with some—to them—totally irrelevant details about big fires blazing in three other great areas of Australia. The Queensland Government estimated that fires which had broken out again at Clermont and Aramac in central Queensland had cost £10,000,000 in nine months of bush fire damage. Fifteen million acres had been burnt out.

The wireless crackled and the news reader continued: "Prisoners at Tumbarumba reformatory prison have been released to fight beside farmers and townspeople to check the Upper Murray fires in New South Wales. The fire, fanned by a thirty mile an hour wind, is sweeping up the Murray Valley as though in a giant funnel. Two small townships—Tabletop and Inferell—have been destroyed."

"Turn the wireless off," Vera Dunn said. She looked anxiously at her four young children—Gary, aged eleven ("I can easily fight a fire, Mum," he had said last week), Wendy, aged eight, Jill, just four, and the baby, Susette.

"We've Got To Get Out"

The old lady, sitting quietly in a corner of the room, gave a nervous cough and said: "We've got to get out. The fire's travelling about thirty miles an hour. It will be here before tomorrow afternoon unless the wind drops."

The Dunns prayed that night for relief. Early on the morning of January 26 they left their Jingellic homestead. They never returned.

They turned 1,400 head of stock loose near the river. They wrapped food up in blankets and sheets, and took eating utensils thrown into pillow-cases. The children cried when they were forced to leave behind their favourite toys. Tears ran down the cheeks of the old grandmother as she fled from the third bushfire in her lifetime. They headed in their Chevrolet car for the River Murray. Their destination was the Victorian country town of Barnawartha, where young Mrs. Dunn had relatives.

They got away only just in time. That day, the New South Wales townships of Talmalmo, Tintaldra, Mannus and Jingellic were all wiped out by fire. Nearby, Walwa township lost 50,000 sheep, 5,000 cattle, 2,000 miles of farm fencing and twenty-five homes. The heat bent three-inch iron telephone posts to the ground.

At the tiny, crowded Walwa hospital, Dr. K. Blewett and four volunteer nurses, none of whom had slept for seventy hours, were working on the thirty-three people maimed by fire. Among Dr. Blewett's patients was the Dunn's neighbour, fifty-two year old Jim Woodlands. That morning he had fled from his burning home with his nine-year-old daughter Violet, but Violet ran back to the homestead to rescue a pet kitten. Unable, then, to race the flames, Woodlands took the child to a well. As there was room for only one in the well he thrust the child in it and lay above, holding her. Woodlands was found an hour later, unconscious. His hair and clothes were burned off, but his hand was still tangled in his unharmed daughter's dress. Violet still clutched the unharmed kitten.

The Dunns heard they had lost everything when they reached the Victorian town of Corryong, almost on the Murray River. The fire was only four miles behind them. It had swept 100 miles through the giant Australian Alps and menaced Cudgewa and Corryong on a four-mile front. These were the two Victorian towns where housewives, at a mass meeting on January 26, decided to stay and defend their homes "no matter what happened." Twice, when a dangerous north-west wind developed, the authorities ordered civilian evacuation. But Corryong (population 850) and Cudgewa (population 400) stayed put to the last man and child. Young children on horseback patrolled the ridges at night, mothers cut sandwiches and made tea for fire fighters, and every able-bodied man fought the fire. For seventeen days, Corryong and Cudgewa remained threatened by suddenly developing capricious winds.

Vow That Has Been Kept

It was at Corryong that old Sarah Dunn made a vow which, to date, she has kept. She said: "No matter what happens, my son and daughter-in-law and their children will never return to Jingellic." She told how she had seen the despair of women and the incomprehension of children when they went back and saw their fire-ravaged homes. In Corryong, the Dunns stayed with a butcher and his wife. After four days they considered themselves an imposition and, despite reassurances to the contrary, they moved on towards Barnawartha, a town on the main rail line between Melbourne and Sydney.

Then Susette, the baby, apparently affected by the sudden changes of climate and environment, became ill. Dr. K. Saunders, of Albury, recommended treatment for the child. "It can't travel in this condition," he said. Susette was admitted to the Albury Base Hospital on Wednesday night, January 30, and the Dunns pushed ahead on the nineteen-mile journey to Barnawartha.

They arrived at Barnawartha late that night and, not knowing just where the wheat and sheep property of Mrs. Dunn's brother was located, they stayed at the local pub. Ironically, this building was the only one left standing on that side of the road twenty-four hours later.

For the next day Barnawartha was a white-hot desolation. The morning was just like any other morning, except for that warm wind kissing your cheek when you went out from your house. Grandmother Dunn did not like it. "It's dangerous still," she said. They laughed at the old bush fire veteran this time. "We're miles away from bush forest," they said, and Harry, her son, added: "It can't happen here." But, like Jingellic, Talmalmo and Tintaldra, it did happen. It was much worse.

At eleven o'clock that morning, Barnawartha postmaster, Len Thomas, closed his switchboard to incoming calls and said to Jean Linder, his telephonist: "You'd better get down to the river for safety. A fire is about fourteen miles north-east of here, heading this way." Thomas stayed at his switchboard, warning local people

Veteran of three disasters, Sarah Dunn joins the Barnawartha battle—with soup

Mrs. Harry Dunn and her children fled to her brother's home—and found it like this

How Barnawartha was cut off. This bridge went in a few minutes as the fire swept by

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To be radiant, energetic and free from minor ailments which take the joy out of living you must avoid constipation. If you want to enjoy regular good health and to be really fit take Beecham's Pills, the purely vegetable laxative, *tonight*. Then you'll be ready for work or play *tomorrow*.

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that the fire was approaching, and was trapped there half an hour later when the fire roared down the main street. By this time, terrorized townsfolk were fleeing along the Melbourne-Sydney highway on foot and horseback, and maddened stock ran before them. For the fire, sweeping through the long, dry grass around the town, went through Barnawartha in five minutes. Three men died.

Jim Long, seventy-five, a volunteer fire fighter, broke his leg when he jumped from a fire-fighting truck. He could not move. He had no alternative but to lie there and to burn to death.

John Andrews, of Albury, had saved the life of Clem Tanner, eighty, and Tanner's two elderly sisters, just five minutes earlier. Andrews raced to Tanner's home to tell him that the fire was sweeping towards them. He said later: "The heat was unbelievable. The flames, in weird spirals, shot into the air like rockets. I never thought it could happen here."

Later, when the wind suddenly changed, more were added to the toll of dead and injured. By then, 300 water pumps, 500,000 feet of hose, tractors, tanks and 1,000 miles of emergency telephone cable were in operation.

Meanwhile, with great presence of mind, three townsmen gathered together all the children they could find. At ten fifty the children were taken in cars to a creek seven miles away, and they hid there until danger had passed.

By mid-afternoon, it was estimated that 100,000 sheep and cattle had been lost, and others wandered the road pitifully burned or blinded. District farmers went out, armed with shotguns, to shoot injured straying stock.

That night a complete emergency medical unit from Albury Hospital, nineteen miles away, was rushed to Barnawartha to treat an unknown number of casualties. Then Barnawartha learned that it was cut off. Trains could not come through from Melbourne because of blazing bridges along the railway track. The electric power lines collapsed, and Barnawartha was blacked out. Water and sewerage failed. Cars could not get through because blazing trees lay across the roads.

Bob Spears, a Lavender Bay transport driver, raced his transport truck up against a tree, trying to upset his blazing load of soft goods and save his truck. The truck glanced against the tree but the load would not shift. He then drove through a paddock fence and ran his truck into a dam.

In that dam, the three Dunn children, with their mother and grandmother, shielded from the Barnawartha fire. There they saw what they had avoided seeing at their home town of Jingellic—people fighting hopelessly against a forty-foot wall of flames to save their homes and then, ultimately, fleeing in panic. Barnawartha, that day, died—in five minutes.

The wind, very early in February, veered to the west and, although the forests still smouldered, there was little danger of a major outbreak—until Tuesday, February 5. Then the Weather Bureau forecast was: "Hot day with strong north winds." Again Australia stood alerted.

For people like the Dunns it was all over. It was merely a question of where the next fires would hit. With a deep compassion which people who have suffered deeply can extend to those about to suffer, they heard of the fires a long way to the south, near the Victorian capital, Melbourne.

The fire of February 5 lasted only one day. But that day a woman was burned to death, a mother and her two children seriously burned, forty homes, three schools and two churches were destroyed.

Mrs. Lena Blanche Wilson, of Toolern Vale, thirty miles from Melbourne, was caught in a barbed wire fence in a race against flames to save her husband's sheep. Her husband found her body on the fence in a paddock, against a background of the smoking ruins of ten homes.

That day, too, a young Canadian war bride and her two children were trapped and critically burned. Clutching the two children in her arms, the woman, Mrs. Patricia Townrow, ran for the safety of a water-hole as flames ravaged her home. Fire fighters found them huddled a few yards from the water-hole.

So this is the—incomplete—story of the 1952 Australian bush fires. A few days ago I showed it to the Dunns. They told me that their greatest worry throughout was that their young baby, Susette, might not recover from her illness at Albury. She did. And so these people, who have lost everything, are quite happy. THE END

NEW AGATHA CHRISTIE NOVEL *starts next week*

JOHN BULL begins publication next week of a glittering new novel by Agatha Christie. It is called **They Do It With Mirrors,** and in it the author reintroduces deceptively meek-and-mild Miss Marple, already known to millions of readers and to playgoers who saw **Murder At The Vicarage.**

Miss Marple has a date at Stonygates, the country house which is also a college for juvenile delinquents. And at Stonygates things happen. The story is in turn funny, exciting, tantalizing—and always magnificently readable.

They Do It With Mirrors is the first new novel in JOHN BULL's great fiction programme for the rest of the year, announced last week.

Others in the list of certain best-sellers are: **The Far Country,** by Nevil Shute, **Campbell's Kingdom,** by Hammond Innes, **Windom's Way,** by James Ramsey Ullman, **House of the Seven Flies,** by Victor Canning, and **Fortune Is A Woman,** by Winston Graham.

These novels will be serialized, in advance of book publication, exclusively in JOHN BULL. There will be a great demand for copies. To ensure yours, place a regular order for JOHN BULL with your newsagent now.

Miss Marple—by Barbara Mullen on the stage . . .

. . . and by artist George Ditton for John Bull serial

THE MIGHTY BALCON

Continued from page 9

that he would not be able to pay as close attention to the week-in, week-out work at Ealing as he had done in the past. But he was like a bee trying to forget about flowers, and somehow he has managed to win the best of his two separate film worlds, though his first love and his last is undoubtedly the studio.

By the time the week has run its course to Friday, Balcon has consumed nearly all his nervous energy. At half past five he leaves the studio for the weekend at Upper Parrock—his fine old half-timbered country house in Sussex—carrying a briefcase bulging with scripts and documents. He climbs wearily out of his car when he arrives home and almost at once throws himself into the settee of his old-world lounge and falls into an exhausted sleep. Frequently he is too tired to eat his dinner that night.

It is at Upper Parrock that Balcon recharges for the coming week. One wet and blustery Saturday morning he was squashing through the mud with a house guest when he said, suddenly: "Isn't this marvellous? At weekends I stop being a film producer and become a farmer. I forget all about films."

Then, without thinking, he added: "By the way, have you heard about that new picture Korda is making?" While he does seem to relax at Upper Parrock, the truth is that Balcon almost never forgets about films.

Dynamo Begins To Hum

After rummaging around his farm for most of Saturday, talking to his bailiff about milk production and admiring his herd of pure-bred Friesians, Sir Michael is ready to put his mind to studio affairs again. On Sunday afternoon he retires to his ground-floor study and goes through the papers he has brought with him from the office. Meanwhile, all during the weekend—and, in fact, all during the week—he has jotted down pages of little memoranda to himself on a block of white paper which his family calls "the halcyon pad." The dynamo has begun to hum again.

By the time he reaches Ealing at nine thirty on Monday morning, he has read every take-home script and paper. "We have a hectic day here on Mondays," says Miss Slater.

Sir Michael never carries a watch nowadays, a peculiarity which is underlined by his insistence on punctuality both by others and himself. Miss Slater reminds him of his appointments and sees that he is not late for them. His reasons for going without a timepiece are unusual but valid. He is one of those unlucky few who seem to affect wrist-watches so that they refuse to keep proper time. He carried a pocket watch for a while, but he often became over-excited at meetings and would start swinging it by its chain and eventually bash it against the table. He went through several watches in this way, getting excited, swinging the chain, and spilling watch gears and broken crystals over table-top, colleagues, and floor, until he had to admit he was not qualified to carry one.

"That's settled then—Southend as usual!"

He is never absent-minded about studio affairs, but in things which do not concern film production he has a tendency to ignore earthly matters.

Years ago, he used to lose his umbrellas regularly—sometimes as often as once a week. His wife, Aileen, who does nearly all his shopping because he can't himself bear to take so much time from the studio, soon tired of buying him new umbrellas. She hit upon what she considered a fool-proof idea and bought him one with a gold band on which his name was engraved. She thought that, even if he left it behind in a restaurant or theatre, it would be bound to turn up.

But the first time he took the umbrella out, he returned home without it, looking a bit puzzled, and sought out his wife. He said: "Aileen, have you any idea where this comes from?" In his hand was the engraved gold band.

In spite of the high standard Balcon sets, and in spite of the consistently good films which come out of Ealing, he is not without his critics. Some time ago a newspaperman referred, in print, to the "puritan paternalism of Sir Michael Balcon, whose eye and hand are on all his films at all stages and who somehow invests the finished product with a finicky anxiety." Balcon takes all newspaper stories and reviews very seriously, but the "puritan paternalism" remark hurt him more deeply than most criticism, perhaps because there was a grain of truth in it. He *is* rather prim in some of his ideas, and has admitted that he is Victorian in his attitude to family and home. This point of view sometimes finds its way, negatively if not otherwise, into an Ealing film.

The Scene He Cut Out

There was a scene written into the script of *Where No Vultures Fly*, for example, in which the boy, Tim Payton, greeted his father by pummelling him in youthful exuberance. The two rolled on the ground in a mock fight. But when Balcon saw it, he said: "Cut it out. No child with any respect for its father would behave like that."

In spite of all this, Sir Michael's way seems to produce many wonderful films, and the same critic who harped on his "paternalism" had to admit that "Ealing is about the only film studio with a streak of genuine idealism." Sir Michael probably stands alone in his willingness to take a chance with a new idea or a new director.

When Monja Danischewsky was in charge of publicity at Ealing, he became fed up with the job and told Balcon about it. "Well, then, what would you like to do?" Sir Michael asked. "I'd like to be a producer," was the answer. Balcon didn't bat an eye. When Danischewsky suggested that he be given the projected film, *Whisky Galore!*, Balcon agreed. "But you'd better get an experienced director," he cautioned.

As it happened, however, another young man, named Alexander Mackendrick, who had been a visual artist and later a scriptwriter at the studio, wanted to become a director. He was eager to begin on *Whisky Galore!* too. Incredibly, Balcon said "Yes"—and the unit went off to the island of Barra under a producer who had never produced and a director who had never directed. "Then Mick sat with his fingers crossed and hoped for the best," Danischewsky said, when he later told of what had happened. "We were lucky, though. The picture was a hit."

"Put It Right," He Said

In fact, such a happy result did not come about quite that simply. When the final cut of *Whisky Galore!* was shown to Sir Michael, he saw that it was a good picture, but not as good as it could be. He assigned Charles Crichton, another Ealing director, to shoot a new scene or two and re-edit the film. "Put it right," were his instructions.

Every one at Ealing agrees that Sir Michael has a rare instinct for putting his finger on a flaw in script or film. He stirs uneasily when reading a bit of script and says: "There's something wrong here, you know." From this vague disturbance, the writer or director must locate and fix the trouble, which might be anything from an inconsistency in characterization to overwriting. "Now, why doesn't Mick like that?" he muses.

When Sir Michael sends a director on to the floor to start a new film, the latter goes through what might be a terrifying experience if he were not used to the ways of Ealing's chief. "Well, good luck—and you'd better make a go of it—this is your last chance, you know—if you don't make a go of it, you won't get another," Balcon says in the stop-and-go manner of speaking he sometimes falls into. This is all sound and no fury on Sir Michael's part, since nearly all his directors have had several "last chances."

When Charles Crichton made *Another Shore*, it was rocketed by the Press. Sir Michael sought out the crushed director. "Look, Charles," he said, "don't worry about this one. Remember that there's only a hair's breadth between a smash success and a failure."

And once, during a round-table conference, Balcon looked enviously around at his directors. "Well, you are a lucky lot of devils," he said. "It's always been my ambition to be a director, but I've never had the courage to go on the floor."

Perhaps that explains why he understands them and their trials so well.

NEXT WEEK: Gate-crashing the film world on £200

SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH

Continued from page 12

writing sitting with the same medium took place about a fortnight later. The pencil began forming words almost immediately.

MARJORIE: Marjorie Marjorie Marjorie. Yes it's me. Yes yes yes. Hullo dear hullo dear hullo dear.

This was a typical opening, for, whenever she spoke to me over the telephone or started a letter to me, she had been in the habit of repeating "Hullo, dear." This led to steadier and more detailed writing.

MARJORIE (writing): Now for some explanations. This is my second attempt, isn't it?

SELF (speaking): Yes, dear, this is your second one.

MARJORIE: The first time I had to have quite a bit of help. More on my own now. But I could not quite do it alone at first and so I gave my name to someone to write and then I realized it was wrongly spelt.

SELF: Of course, and the mistake is fully explained now. Anyhow, what you did get across was remarkable.

MARJORIE: How truly wonderful. Yes, so it is. But it is all well known here and is very often done. There are many methods. I shall become quite proficient at this business.

By now the room was growing darker and it was becoming difficult to read the writing, so I got up for a moment to switch on the light. This brought forth the following.

MARJORIE: Please do not let anything interfere with this.

SELF: But nothing is interfering.

MARJORIE: I saw you get up and go away.

SELF: I only went over to the door to switch on the light. Did it disturb you?

MARJORIE: Yes, a little. It is growing dark with you but here all is light. I can see much better than you both.

The next sitting a month later started off in a happy vein.

MARJORIE: I am so happy, dear. I am so happy. This writing is becoming quite a habit. But what a nice habit. Yes I am really happy now. Really it makes even parting worth while, for now I know there is no such thing as parting at all. I have the sure knowledge that one day we shall be reunited for ever. I feel in time I shall be able to give you so much more definite evidence. Thanks for sharpening the pencil.

SELF: Oh, did you watch me doing that just before we started?

MARJORIE: Yes. And it was me that touched you then.

(While I was standing by the fireplace, sharpening the pencil, I had felt a definite touch on my leg, and had turned round thinking the medium had knocked against me in passing, but she was nowhere near.)

SELF: Was it really you? The very first time I've felt a definite solid touch like that!

MARJORIE: I was so delighted. Yes, yes. You did feel me. I was so close and touched your leg. You are more sensitive when you come into a more psychic vibration such as this and I was waiting to come and you were mentally so close. I can hear this medium very well, more clearly than many other people. This is something to do with chemical attraction. When we listen to some people talking it is like the parrot house at the Zoo or a wireless oscillating all the time.

SELF: You're doing famously with the writing today!

MARJORIE: It is so much help to others over here too. We keep a record of all these letters also. And you are so patient. How many people would sit here like this for so long? I know I cannot get over the wonder of it all. We are ahead of the rest of the world. One day all people will know how easy it is to get across the bridge. I can pick things up from this medium's subconsciousness. Her mind can take simultaneously two lines of thought and receives me and you at once.

SELF: Is there not a danger, then, that what is in the medium's mind could sometimes colour or distort the sender's message?

MARJORIE: It sometimes happens, but in this case I can make impressions strong enough to oust hers. See what I mean?

SELF: Yes, I see.

MARJORIE: But don't be impatient. For there is much in store for you yet. Please remember that nothing will ever change me, and I will wait patiently for you. Yes—yes. I really know.

So ended my third test of automatic writing.

NEXT WEEK: Reginald M. Lester sums up his investigation of spiritualism

THE TROUBLE WITH SPRING

Continued from page 11

as "dad." It made him seem almost a stranger. And the friendlier he got with the Otwells—with Mrs. Otwell—the more remote he seemed.

Moreover, he was enjoying himself and I wasn't. And mother wasn't there. It seemed especially wrong, somehow, for him to be enjoying himself in her absence.

After what seemed a reasonable time, I put down my magazine and went over and addressed father sternly: "Dad, when are we going home?"

"Pretty soon, Bob. After a while." His hand moved in a negligent gesture, waving me away. His own little boy. I retired furiously to my corner and my magazine . . . and the next I knew, father was shaking me awake, crowding me into my jacket. As from a great distance, I heard Mrs. Otwell's clear voice: "Poor little fellow, so sound asleep. Let me help with the buttons. Shouldn't you carry him, Joe?"

Joe. I struck her hands from my jacket. "You leave me alone!" I bawled. "And stop calling my father Joe!" I plunged blindly towards the door.

WHEN I awoke, my room was bright with sunlight. Father had let me have my sleep out instead of calling me at the usual time. I dressed and stumbled out looking for him. Spring had come overnight; the sky was a soft, clear blue, the sun dazzling, the air heavy and sweet. Wisps of vapour rose from the roofs and walls, and the edges of the wheel ruts in the yard were turning grey. Another day or two and we could start ploughing.

Father was outside the granary. He was cleaning up the saddles, his and mine. I stared dully; it seemed an odd, pointless job for such a day.

"What you doing that for?"

"Oh, hallo, Bob," he said cheerfully. "Woke up, did you?—Why, Mr. and Mrs. Otwell are coming out this afternoon to look at horses. She wants one to get around on, while they're here. I told you last night. Remember?"

I did not remember. The brightness of the day dissolved, obscured by the shadow of Mrs. Otwell. "Oh . . . you going to let her use my saddle?"

"I am, if she wants to. Any objection?"

"Well—shucks, it's my saddle."

He put down the can of saddle soap and turned to me. "Look here, Bob, we've had about enough of this. I was ashamed of you last night, the way you acted—sulking off in a corner the whole evening and then snarling and snapping like a sick wolf at Mrs. Otwell. I know you were two-thirds asleep when that happened, so I'll overlook it. But from now on you better quit acting so ornery and have better manners."

"Well, all right. But I don't like her."

"Never mind if you don't like her. You be polite to her, if you know what's good for you." Then he was willing to be friends again. "I been wondering which horse would suit her best. She claims to be quite a rider. I had Gipsy in mind for her, or maybe Dolly. What's your idea?"

I rammed my fists in my pockets and scowled at the horses in the corral.

"Let her have Turk," I said, sniggering, "if she's such a rider. I bet she'd look fine on Turk."

That was pure meanness and father knew it. Turk was a young blue roan gelding, the handsomest and best-gaited animal in the bunch, and fast as greased lightning. But you couldn't trust him. He wasn't vicious at all, just wilful and spoiled, but he could buck like a demon when he wanted, and you never knew when the notion would strike him. With mother, though, he was as docile as a lamb. He always behaved well with her and would follow her around like a dog. But he was nice to her by choice, not from discipline, so even mother never felt safe with him and, of course, she never tried to ride him.

So father understood the malice in my suggestion that Mrs. Otwell should ride Turk. But he pretended to take it seriously. "It's an idea," he said. "Maybe, though, you better get on him first and ride him around for her. Let her see what he's like."

That hurt, and I was sorry I'd mentioned Turk. He dug deeper: "How about it? You willing to ride Turk?" I shook my head. No. "All right, then. Stop being smart-alecky. I told you, Bob, I've had enough." He resumed work on the saddles. "I've got a job laid out for you this morning. I want you to clean up the house."

"Clean house! Aw, for—how come?"

"We'll have to ask the Otwells to come in, naturally, and we don't want things in a mess. Don't stand there sticking your lip out," he said. "Go get busy. And make sure you do a good job."

All the time I was working, I brooded sulkily over things father had said. I was smart-alecky, was I? And he was ashamed of me . . . I cleaned his house for him—for him and his dude eastern friends. It wasn't really clean, not the way mother kept it, but it was good enough for them.

When I got through, I took my rifle and headed for the deep woods.

I STAYED away until sundown. My idea was to get back after he had started on the chores and pitch in and help with them, thus taking the sharp edge off his anger—for I knew he'd be good and cross with me for my absence. He would understand it for what it was: an insult aimed at the Otwells.

My strategy failed, though. Father wasn't doing chores. He was sitting there in the kitchen, calmly smoking his pipe.

"So," he said, "you're back, are you? Sit down and eat your supper. Then I want to talk to you."

I said nervously: "Hadn't we better go m-milk?"

"The calves will take care of the milking. They're in with the cows."

"In with— But holy smoke, they're almost weaned, and——"

"They can get unweaned. I told you I was tired of milking. I'm going to sell the blasted cows—run 'em in Robinson's auction sale next week. Never mind that now. You better eat, if you're hungry. I've got something to say to you."

There was shepherd's pie on the stove. I filled a plate and fiddled around with it, my appetite gone. He was going to sell our cows. I'd complained enough about milking and taking care of them, but to sell them—that was terrible. We had to have cows; it was the way we lived. . . . I studied father cautiously, and the more I studied the more upset I got.

He was wearing his high-heeled boots and the trousers of his best suit and a clean shirt. And he had shaved again, the second time in two days, and his moustache was trimmed close instead of being long and droopy. He didn't look like himself at all.

"Bob," he said evenly, "what have you got against the Otwells?"

"Nothing, I guess. I don't know. When's Ma coming home?"

"Bob, stop trying to change the subject. You told me you didn't like Mrs. Otwell. I want to know why."

Lord, I couldn't tell him. All I could do was hang my head and mumble "I don' know." That was true, in a way; I didn't know, not well enough to put it into words.

After a while, father's patience wore thin. He bit down on his pipe, breathing hard. "Listen, boy," he said carefully. "Let me tell you something. The Otwells are all right. They're nice people when you get to know them. Mrs. Otwell's a little different from what we're used to, but she's a fine woman, in her own way. What's more, I want to keep in good with her. I'm counting on——"

All at once I couldn't stand any more; it was cry or get mad, and I did both. "Quit talking about her!" I bawled. "I don't want to hear! I hate her—doggone snooty ol' dude. I hate her! Let me alone, I tell you! Let me alone!" I fled up the stairs, yelping "Let me alone!" at every jump.

I flung myself across my bed and lay wallowing in misery and self-pity, burning with small-boy hatred for Mrs. Otwell. It was her fault, somehow, that my world was askew—that mother was gone and I was at odds with my father, and he had changed so and all life was changed around and confused so I didn't know where I was any more. She was to blame. . . .

The gap between father and me was wider than ever next morning. After breakfast he looked at me gravely and said: "Well, Bob? You got anything to say to me?"

I answered, unrepentant: "What about?"

"You know what about." He waited and tried again. "Look, Bob, I'm going to see Gus Robinson this morning, about putting my cows in on his auction sale. I'd like to take you with me." He paused. "But if you're going to keep on acting this way, maybe you better stay here and sort potatoes, instead."

It was a fair offer. A word of apology, a promise, would square everything between us. Otherwise I could spend the bright, spring morning sorting out spoiled potatoes from the bins in the dark, dank root cellar, a job I despised. I wanted to end the conflict with father, but pride and stubbornness held me.

"You want the seed potatoes sorted, too?" I said.

He sighed. "Yes, seed potatoes, too. Now here's something for you to think over. Mrs. Otwell hasn't picked out a horse yet; she couldn't make up her mind between Gipsy and Doll. They'll be out again Sunday. So you'll have another chance to be decent to her, and show her you know how to behave. I hope, for your sake, that you do."

He went to hitch up the team, and I got a lantern and descended to the root cellar, sore and abused and martyred.

FATHER had been gone about an hour when a horse and buggy drove into the yard. I popped up out of my burrow, blinking in the glare of sunlight. Mrs. Otwell said: "Good morning, Bob. Is your father at home?"

I swallowed a couple of times. "No. He—no he's not."

"Oh? That's too bad. But it doesn't matter, really. Are the horses in the paddock? I'd like to see them."

"In the——? Oh. Yeah. Yeah, they're in the paddock." We called it corral.

Reluctantly, I led the horse to a post, and tied him. Mrs. Otwell gathered her skirts and leaped lightly from the buggy. She was wearing a riding habit, like the duchesses and fine ladies in the English magazine—bowler hat, stock, black fitted coat, and a black skirt so long and full she had to carry it over her arm when she walked. A crazy kind of outfit, in my opinion. When my mother went riding, she sat astride the horse like a sensible person, wearing a pair of father's overalls. She didn't perch sideways like a monkey on a stick, in a bowler hat and a skirt as big as a tent.

Mrs. Otwell said suddenly: "That horse. The roan. Where did he come from?" She was looking in the corral.

"Why, that's Turk. He's one of our horses. He——"

"Strange, I didn't see him yesterday. Were you riding him?"

"Me? I should say not. He——"

Mrs. Otwell went quickly to the corral fence. "He's a real beauty, isn't he?" she exclaimed, her voice warm with admiration. "Turk, is that his name? Come here, Turk! Come along, old fellow."

Turk walked right over to her. "Oh, you really are a beauty!" she said, rubbing Turk's chin. "Come, let's have a better look at you."

She headed for the corral gate. I began to get alarmed then, and dropped the saddle and bridle and ran after her. "Listen, Mrs. Otwell, you don't want

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

THIS picture was taken after a fancy dress party at which I was dressed as a toreador. I was about ten or eleven at the time, attending All Saints' choir school in Marylebone, London.

The first World War was still on, and we rehearsed for the end-of-term plays in the middle of air-raids. The plays were the highspots of school life; not only did we have a highly talented master as our producer, but the school was famous for its productions, and Ellen Terry, among others, used to come and watch our efforts.

Until my voice broke, I was usually cast as a woman, and was Maria in *Twelfth Night* and Katharina in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The *Shrew* was so successful that we were invited to give a special matinée performance at the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. *The Times* reviewed it and was kind enough to say that the performance "called neither for reservation on account of age nor for patronizing indulgence."

I was moved to a public school when fourteen, and did not like the change. My father used to play cricket for Hampshire and I was expected to have inherited his skill. When I went in last for my house and we needed only eight runs to win, I was clean bowled after I had scored three—by Douglas Bader, who was to become one of the R.A.F.'s greatest heroes.

The theatre was always my first love, and I once risked severe punishment by breaking out of school to see *Lilac Time* at the local theatre. At school I made myself thoroughly unpopular, and, when I was in the school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I wrote in my diary: "Played Puck very well, much to everybody's disgust."

At last I left, and at eighteen managed to get my first real professional part, at the Brighton Hippodrome. Naturally I was nervous about my first entrance, and was so screwed up that I forgot everybody's warning about the wide wooden bar at the base of the scenery door. The result was that I made my first appearance flat on my face.

Today he is world-famous as an actor. For his name, see page 31

hot milk please/

cold for me/

mine with marmalade/

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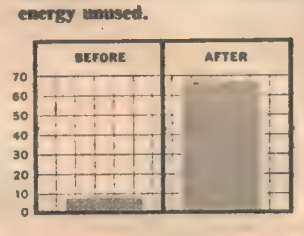

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to fool around with him. He's no horse for you. He's pretty wild, sometimes."

She was already in the corral. And Turk came up and nuzzled her, rolling his eye at her as much as to say: "Wild? Me? Don't you believe it."

So she told me crisply to be quiet, and walked around Turk, admiring him, looking him over. She was going to want to get on him, and it was a powerful temptation to let her do it. I kept thinking of how she would look, coming off over his head, in her bowler hat and all her finery. It made a nice picture. . . . But I kept thinking, too, of what father would say, or do, when he heard about it. After all, I was responsible for her. What if she got hurt? Being thrown by Turk wasn't like being tossed off an ordinary horse. It was more like being shot out of a cannon.

But if she did decide to ride him, how could I prevent it?

"I'd like to see him led," she said. "Get the bridle, please."

I hoped maybe the bridle would start him acting up, and discourage her; Turk wasn't used to curb bits. So I went and got it, and he let me put it on him.

Instead of getting him excited, though, the bit interested him for a time. He kept working it around, feeling it, while I led him up and down, walking and trotting.

"That will do," she said finally. "Now the saddle, please."

I LOOKED at Turk. His eyes were commencing to show white and he shook his head and switched his tail nervously; he had decided he didn't think much of that curb bit. He would probably let us saddle him—he rarely objected to being saddled—and let Mrs. Otwell get aboard. Then he would blow sky high.

I said earnestly: "Mrs. Otwell, you can't ride this horse. He's dangerous. Even dad won't ride him. He acts gentle until you get on him, and then. . . . Listen, Mrs. Otwell, I'm telling you, he'll throw you sure."

She smiled, a faint, superior smile. "I've been thrown before, you know; I'll risk it." She turned away and went to fetch the saddle. She wouldn't believe me. And I could think of only one way to convince her.

Lord knows I didn't want to do it, but I threw the reins over Turk's neck and grabbed his mane and shinned up on his back.

Turk must have been as surprised as I was; I doubt if he'd ever been ridden bareback before. He lunged forward, fighting to get his head down to start bucking. The curb was all that saved me. It kept him from bogging his head—something I never could have managed with a snaffle. Since he couldn't buck, he ran. We roared out of the corral gate and up through the yard. I was not happy. I regretted deeply the impulse that had put me on Turk. All in the world I wanted was to get off. But I didn't dare let go and fall off, the rate he was going.

Turk slowed suddenly. I heard mother's voice calling loudly: "Turk! Whoa, Turk! Whoa, I say!" A wagon was turning in through our gate and mother was standing up in the wagon. "Bob!" she said. "You get down off that horse right this minute!"

I was only too glad to oblige.

MOTHER was still carrying on about it. "The idea!" she said, thrusting a stick of wood into the stove. "The very idea, that woman coming out here and ordering Bob around, almost getting him killed! I certainly told her a thing or two!"

"You must have," father chuckled. "She wouldn't even speak to me when I met her on the road. Whipped up her horse and sailed by with her nose in the air. What did you say to her, Amy?"

"Never mind." Mother looked a little embarrassed. "I said more'n I meant to, really. Seeing Bob on that runaway horse got me upset."

Father knocked out his pipe. "Well, it's too bad, in a way. I had big plans for Mrs. Otwell."

"Oh, you did, did you? What kind of plans?"

"I was going to sell her Turk, for one thing. Not for her, for her brother. He's a rich man. He plays that horseback game, polo. I figured I might get a pretty fancy price for Turk, once I cured him of bucking."

"Oh. . . . Well, go ahead and cure him. Somebody else'll buy him."

"Yes, but for less money. Another thing, this brother's got a big place somewhere around Montreal, where he keeps his horses. I had an idea I might get a job with him."

"Wha-at? Leave here to be a rich man's stable hand?"

"I thought you might like it better back there. I thought, from some remarks you let drop last winter, you'd had enough homesteading."

"Oh, well, that." She flushed. "You know I didn't mean all I said then. . . . By the way, what's this Bob tells me about selling the cows?"

"Well, there again—I figured since you were so tired of taking care of the milk, and washing the separator——"

"Please, Joe, stop it," mother said pleadingly. "It's not fair, holding people to what they say when they've got cabin fever." She paused, and looked wonderingly at father. "Joe, you really mean you'd have given up ranching and—and everything, just because I. . . . Why, Joe!"

She reached over and touched his hand, and for a moment they looked at each other in a way I hadn't seen for a long, long time. Mother turned away hastily, and bent to look in the oven. A wonderful fragrance of apple pie poured into the room. "Now you two, clear out," she said, her voice a little muffled. "I've got to get supper."

Father picked up his hat and winked at me gravely. "Come on, Bob," he said. "We better take those calves away from the cows, put 'em back in their own pen. It looks like the old homestead is back to normal again." THE END

NOW YOU KNOW

PLANNING a concrete path or patio for the garden? Here's how to make your own paving slabs. In a sheltered spot with level ground, fix two-inch wooden battens about four feet apart and spread sand between. Then mix up your concrete (one of cement to three of sand with just enough water to bind) and spread it between the battens. Level off and leave for an hour.

Next, cut the concrete into odd-shaped or rectangular slabs. Leave for five days, occasionally sprinkling the slabs with water. Meantime roll out your path or patio space, and when the slabs are ready set them in a thin layer of concrete. To make coloured slabs, blend iron oxide with earth colours in the cement, or buy specially coloured cement.

"Hargreaves, would *you* come and check this gentleman's waist measurement?"

DARK CONSPIRACY

Continued from page 13

while the sinister crackling grew in volume, and a wicked tongue of flame spurted up and died, like a danger signal in the grey light.

The horse-keepers and grooms who lived over or in the vicinity of the stables were already up and doing when Phoebe and Derrick reached the scene of disaster. Men and boys were working like demons to coax the demented horses out of the stables, the sweat pouring down their blackened faces, while others, forming a chain of buckets, strove desperately to quell the growing fire. Phoebe, without a word to any man, seized a bucket and became one of an ever-growing human chain; while somewhere in the smoke and reek she saw Derrick helping to soothe and quieten the frantic horses as, one by one, they were coaxed out.

After about an hour, when all the King's horses were freed and the attempt to save the stables given up as hopeless, Derrick came to her, putting his cloak about her shoulders and drawing her to one side.

"My love," he said very quietly, "a miracle hath come, in the tragic guise of this fire. His Majesty and the duke are taking coach immediately, to return to London. They cannot have news of this disaster at the Rye, since 'tis near upon forty miles away. Therefore will the King's coming take them unprepared, and he will drive by in safety."

THEY went out into the one long street of stricken Newmarket, and there forgot everything of the plot in the scenes of horror which met their gaze.

The fire had by this time demolished all the wooden houses on the south side of the street, and the wind, carrying sparks and burning brands across to the other side, threatened that likewise. The roar of the flames, the crashing of timbers, the screams of terror, the confused shouting of orders, the rumble of cart wheels as the inhabitants drove their families, and what goods they could succeed in rescuing, to the safety of the surrounding country, all merged into one dreadful cacophony.

And all of a sudden, as she gaped at this hideous confusion, Phoebe ceased to see it. It was eclipsed by one solitary figure, the sight of which sent her reeling dizzily back into a world she had almost forgotten, the foreign, nightmare world of treason and plot.

"That man!" she shouted to Derrick, clutching his arm with one hand and pointing with the other. "He is William Rumbold, the maltster's brother. He must be skulking here to spy upon the King. See, he has gotten him a horse; he's away to warn them to be ready at the Rye House when the King drives by this day!"

The arm she had gripped shook itself free as she spoke, and she saw her lover thrusting and jostling his way across the street in the direction in which she had pointed. With a sobbing cry, she rushed after him, towards the figure of William Rumbold who, wigless, hatless, but fully dressed and armed, was engaged in trying to drag a terrified horse out of an inn yard into the cluttered street. Before her went Derrick, inexorably pushing his way through the seething crowds, and drawing his sword as he went.

He was but a few paces from Rumbold when the latter, with a quick, skilful movement, suddenly swung himself upon the maddened horse's back and hit it with the flat of his sword. It bounded forward, then it reared; for Derrick, careless of the prancing forelegs, had leapt at it, had caught it by its long mane, and, hanging on with all his strength, prevented its further progress. With a volley of curses, Rumbold bent down to beat him off, but as he did so the horse reared again, he was thrown over its side, and he and his assailant lay in a heap upon the ground.

They were up on the instant, and their swords rang together. Phoebe, hovering fearfully behind her lover, heard nothing but the ring of steel, saw nothing but those two gracefully dancing figures, who thrust and parried as absorbedly as if they had been in the fencing-school. The frantic crowds milled round them, ignoring the strange duel, far too engrossed in securing their own safety from the fire to concern themselves with the odd spectacle of men fighting a duel in the open street. The general uproar drowned the sounds of this private battle; the light of the flames glinted red upon the snickering steel, and the smoke curled about the two bodies which lunged, vaulted, bounded and turned round each other.

Desperately, Phoebe looked around for some weapon with which she could come to her lover's aid; she had just spied an iron bolt from a door, and had snatched it up—though it was so hot that it shrivelled the skin on her fingers—when a sudden succession of new sounds approaching down the street made her pause and stare.

"Make way! Make way in the King's name!" And mingling with these shouts came the whinnying of horses, the hollow clatter of many hooves, the rumble of wheels, and the jingle of steel. Even the demented crowds took notice of these sounds, and made haste to clear the middle of the street.

Momentarily Phoebe was swept away from the circling figures and pushed to the front rank of the crowd in her immediate neighbourhood, and so saw, looming out of the smoke, the figures of men on horseback, whose scarlet cassocks, stiff black jack-boots, plumed helmets and steel cuirasses proclaimed them to be Life Guards. Disciplined and smart as became this famous regiment, they looked startlingly incongruous amid the tattered, dishevelled mob; even the horses, though they snorted and sweated with terror at the reek of burning and the flickering flames, behaved themselves bravely, answering to every order of heel and voice.

And then the cavalcade passed in a cloud of smoke and dust along the road to London.

As the noise of it died away, the crowd melted and Phoebe made her way back to the duel. She saw that it was ended. One of the figures who had been lunging and thrusting so absorbedly just now had vanished; the other, that of William Rumbold, stood panting and sweating and wiping his sword blade on the skirt of his coat.

Phoebe gasped, hitting out at those who separated her from him. She came face to face with the maltster's brother as he spat viciously upon a prone figure which lay bleeding at his feet. She raised the iron bolt she still carried, and with all her force struck him across the face.

She did not see him clap his hands to his mangled features and stagger

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Miss Joyce Rutherford, of the Good Housekeeping Institute, who personally supervised the washing of the towels and also refereed the Whiteness Test at the May Fair Hotel

6 FAMOUS WASHING POWDERS ON TRIAL— 326 HOUSEWIVES ACT AS JUDGES

TO the May Fair Hotel, London, recently, came over three hundred housewives — all judges in a great wash-day whiteness test.

The well-known Good Housekeeping Institute in London carried out the test. They took 6 new white tea-towels and soiled them all equally — taking care that tea and fruit stains were included. Then the towels were washed.

Six famous washing powders — both well-tried and new — were used, a different one for each towel. The manufacturer's instructions on the packet were carefully followed in each case.

Later, the towels were laid out for inspection.

WAITING TO CAST THEIR VOTES. Some of the hundreds of housewives arriving in the Ballroom Foyer of the May Fair Hotel to vote in the great Whiteness Test.

305 OUT OF 326 WOMEN. The great Whiteness Test on washing powders was carried out in London by an impartial authority, the Good Housekeeping Institute. 305 out of 326 women voted the Persil-washed towel the whitest of all!

How the Voting Went

One at a time, the housewives filed past, and each was asked to pick out the whitest towel. None of the women knew which washing powders had been used, and the towels were identified by numbers only.

The result? 305 out of the 326 voted for the Persil one! So that's the real truth about wash-day! Persil washes whiter — you can *see* it does!

And the secret? Persil's millions of tiny oxygen bubbles! No matter how other washing powders are made, they don't have these unique Persil oxygen bubbles. They shift the dirt out as nothing else can. Persil-washed things are white because they're clean.

So Persil beats the lot — the well-tried ones *and* the newcomers, too!

Why Persil is best for ALL your wash

Like buttons and bows or frills and flounces, Persil and whiteness go together. Perhaps that's why some people don't realize what a wonderful job Persil can do with ALL your wash — not only the whites.

Gentle Persil suds *ease* out the dirt . . . make your coloureds *brighter*, *fresher* . . . your woollens *softer*.

Yes, Persil is kind to ALL your wash — and to your hands! You can *feel* it is!

PERSIL washes whiter!

PER 1247-80

backwards; she did not hear the bellow of anguish which was torn from him. She saw and heard nothing but the faintly stirring and muttering figure of her lover on the littered ground. Flinging herself down beside him, she lifted him a little in her arms. From a jagged hole in the breast of his coat blood was oozing thickly, and as he opened his lips to speak to her, two red trickles flowed from either side of his mouth. His face was ashen, and the sweat of death glistened on his forehead, but his eyes held recognition in them, and a last fear.

"Ne'er stir, I've knocked the rogue on the head as neat as a butcher does an ox," Phoebe assured him, in answer to that unspoken torment of mind. "There will be no warning given them at the Rye."

It was plain that he heard and understood, for the fear drained away from his eyes and a sigh of contentment shuddered through his limp body. Frantically striving to staunch the wound in his chest with her petticoat, Phoebe implored aid from the scurrying, preoccupied figures around her, but no man paused to notice. Her lover was trying to speak, and laying her cheek close to his, she made out the muttered words:

"Money in my pocket . . . home to Hampstead . . . your father . . . promise me."

"I swore I would not budge from your side till—till all was done," said Phoebe, squeezing her eyelids together to keep back her tears.

The bleeding mouth mumbled urgently:

"Must go home . . . lay an information . . . plotters may strike yet . . . I entreat you. . . ."

"It shall be done," promised Phoebe tremulously. "Don't fox yourself, they shall pay for their treason, and we'll be at Tyburn to see it." And then, all of a sudden, she could not keep back any longer the anguish which racked her. "Derrick, oh Derrick," she sobbed, burrowing her face against his coat, "don't die, pray don't leave me."

She felt his face turn to her, and into her ear his voice spoke with sudden clarity and enormous tenderness:

"I shall never leave you now, my dearest life, for there is no separation save estrangement. I shall wait in peace until you come to me."

Then he died, very quietly, in her arms.

THE landlord of Jack Straw's Castle at Hampstead, taking a Sunday afternoon siesta in his elbow-chair, awoke with a start at the sound of the outer door of the tavern being opened. Scowling, he heaved himself out of his chair and padded across in stockinged feet to the hatch which opened on to the common-room counter. Unlatching it and peering in, his scowl gave place to an astonished smile; for seated at one end of the counter was none other than Miss Phoebe Jolly.

"Now marry come up, sweetheart!" exclaimed the landlord, "here is a welcome sight. You have not put a foot across my threshold for near upon five months, I swear, which I have taken most unkindly of you."

"Well I am here now," replied Phoebe shortly, "and desire a quart of good red, of which you shall partake with me for old times' sake."

As the landlord went to draw the wine he surreptitiously observed her, and noted that the change which rumour said had come upon her of late was plainly evident. She looked as pretty as ever in her Sunday gown of muslin and the ribbon confining her bright hair, but there was a kind of new reserve in her eyes and something almost subdued in her manner.

"Adad," said the landlord, placing the wine flask on the counter together with two of his best glasses, "you are become the most talked of wench in Hampstead these last months, my dear, and I have longed extremely to hear of all your adventures from your own fair lips. Kidnapped, they tell me, by a pack of nasty conspirators, and then away with your father to lay informations at Whitehall, and——"

"My friend," interrupted Phoebe sharply, "all this is stale news, and must be as familiar to you by this time as the neckverse to the Ordinary of Newgate. Pray don't plague me to rehearse it yet again, for I did not come hither for that. I came to lay a ghost."

It was on the tip of the landlord's tongue to ask her what she meant, but something in her manner restrained him. After a pause during which Phoebe sipped her wine, she said abruptly:

"As for the late plot, we shall hear the end of it this week, methinks, when my Lord Russell goes to the block and Rumbold and two others to Tyburn. You'll have heard that my Lord Essex cut his throat in the Tower yesterday, which will save Ketch a labour, and that the Lords Grey and Howard are turned evidence for the Crown. They say that Monmouth will back 'em up, if he can find courage sufficient to dare the vengeance of his fellow plotters, and that Algernon Sidney likewise will lose his head. Ferguson's escaped, as it seems he always doth, and the rest are either fled or are hasting to turn evidence."

"They tell me 'twas your father's friend, Mr. Keeling the oil merchant, who laid the first information last month, but was not credited," the landlord prompted her eagerly, "and that he was moved to confess by remorse that he had countenanced so bloody a design."

"His remorse was as difficult to arouse as a malt-worm who hath guzzled all night," retorted Phoebe scornfully, "seeing that my father applied himself to him directly I returned from Newmarket in March, and he did not stir until June. And when he did, 'twas only for fear some of the others in the plot would be beforehand in laying an information, for there were rumours of the conspiracy going round the coffee-houses. Yet he has his reward, and good luck to him, and so have I, for telling my tale so neat and pretty to Mr. Secretary. Fifty golden guineas, my friend, which will serve me as a portion when I am married next month."

The landlord's mouth fell a-gape at this statement.

"Married!" he exclaimed. "Why, bless me, here is news. Nay, Phoebe, will you break all the hearts in Hampstead?"

"Pray don't fox me with that sort of talk," snapped Phoebe. "Did you think I'd remain a widow for the rest of my life? You will please to drink to my future husband, who, I may tell you, is Alfred Dubs, the farmer."

IT was not yet five o'clock when she came out into the sunshine, and the Heath was still thronged with people taking their Sunday promenade.

Phoebe stood undecided for a moment, then, crossing the road which led to Highgate, she descended the steep slope of the Heath and strolled along the less frequented paths; for she was not yet in the mood for company.

She was too much of a realist and too lacking in sentimentality consciously to mope after Derrick. Yet she could scarcely think of anything else; and certainly there was little enthusiasm in her blood for Alfred Dubs, that middle-aged and somewhat stolid farmer.

Keeping to the trees, she was about to cross a little path upon the Heath when she paused abruptly with an impatient exclamation. For there, approaching her arm-in-arm, were none other than her father and stepmother, returning from their Sunday walk. It was too late to avoid them, for her dog was already barking them a greeting.

"Why, there you are, my love," said Mr. Jolly cheerfully. "Bless me, we knew not where you had got to."

"Fie, for shame, Phoebe," chided Mrs. Jolly, panting a little because her stays were laced too tight, "your hair is all in a tangle and there is a rent in that pretty gown of yours. You must come home, my little bride, and make your toilette, since your dear betrothed is to sup with us tonight."

"I'll walk a while yet," said Phoebe shortly, "and since 'tis near upon three hours till supper-time, I beg you will excuse me."

"Such a wild thing still!" sighed Mrs. Jolly, "but marriage will tame you, ne'er stir. Bless you, child, go your ways, and I will hasten home to make our preparations. I promise you, you shall not blush for the entertainment this evening. Why, good day to ye, neighbours," she broke off to exclaim, bowing graciously to a family party which was overtaking the Jollys. "What a sweet, fine afternoon! I was just a-going home, and will walk with you, if you please. . . ."

Her voice prattled away into the distance, as, surrounded by an admiring throng of neighbours, she picked her way homewards on unsuitable high heels.

Phoebe, turning to continue her walk in the opposite direction, was surprised and not too well pleased when her father, putting a hand through her arm, intimated his intention of accompanying her.

"'Tis too fine a day to go home yet," said he. He glanced back over his shoulder, ascertained that his wife was out of sight, and, with a sigh of relief, lifted his hat, pulled off the peruke which Mrs. Jolly now compelled him to wear on Sundays and holidays, and stuffed the uncomfortable thing into his pocket. "And since I am soon to lose you, my wench, pray let me have your company while I can."

Phoebe said nothing, but pressed his arm. The old affection between father and daughter was as strong as ever, though during the last month even Phoebe had found him a little trying.

DANIEL'S new rôle as a witness against the plotters had, truth to tell, gone to his head, and he had become tedious and boastful. From being for so many years a struggling and obscure tradesman, he had become, overnight, a minor public figure. He had found himself cosseted and deferred to by Secretaries of State and Privy Councillors, while his former tormentors were being tried for their lives; he rode backwards and forwards to the Secretary's lodging at Whitehall at his Majesty's expense; he was paid handsome compensation for the time he must spend away from his counter.

It was only natural, therefore, that this simple, good man should inflate himself a little. Yet beneath all this surface change in him, Daniel Jolly remained the same doting father. And this afternoon, as they walked in silence through the trees of the Heath, he felt there was so much quiet sympathy between them that he might broach a question which had been troubling him.

"Phoebe, my dear," he said hesitantly, "you are sure you wish to wed Alfred Dubs? Speak straight, my child. Money is not everything, and for my part, I would fain lose your company. You know you are ever welcome to stay in my house unless your affections are truly engaged."

"I will wed Dubs," Phoebe said softly. "You must not worry about me, Father."

They walked in silence for a while. And then Daniel spoke again. "If it pains you to speak of it, pray say so at once, but is it meet for you to wed if you are grieving for—for another man?"

"Meet enough," said Phoebe shortly; and then, relenting, turned to him with a wry smile. "I will never grieve less for him—and yet; cherishing, not grieving, would be nearer the sense of it. I'll remember Derrick Calder as long as I live. He was a man. Oh, yes," she said softly, "he was a man. But he is dead and he would not wish me to love a ghost. For you and I and Alfred Dubs and the rest of us are among the living and must be about our business. It is our duty. It's a strange thing he taught me—duty. Just a few months ago I should have laughed at it."

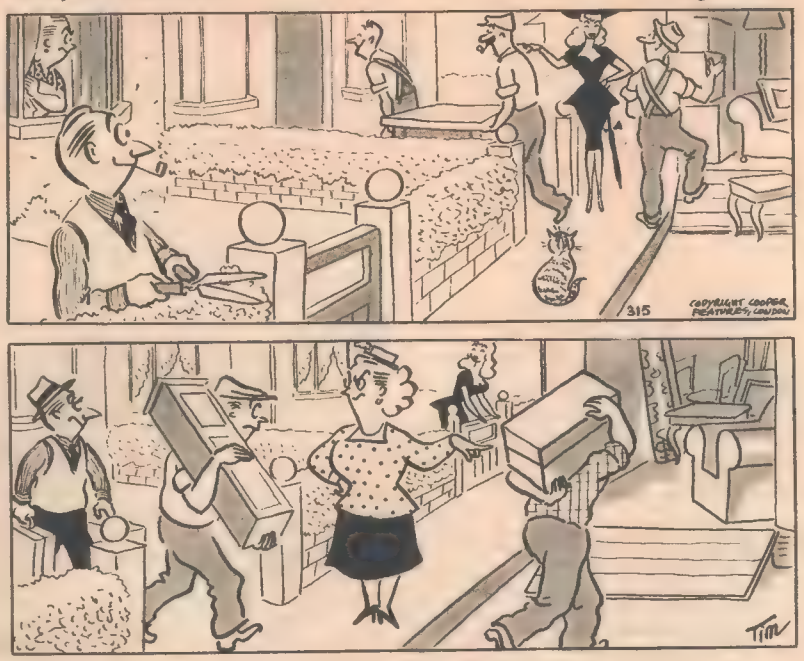
She looked round, for her father had stopped and was looking at her, cogitating upon something half understood but profoundly moving.

"Aye, that is the truth of it," he said at last. "He was a man indeed, and he knew duty. Our friend must have it writ on his tombstone." And then, simply and without embarrassment, Daniel Jolly made a motion of salute with his hat.

THE END

"Dark Conspiracy" is published in book form by Robert Hale, price 12s. 6d.

OH, JOHNNY! — *by TIM*



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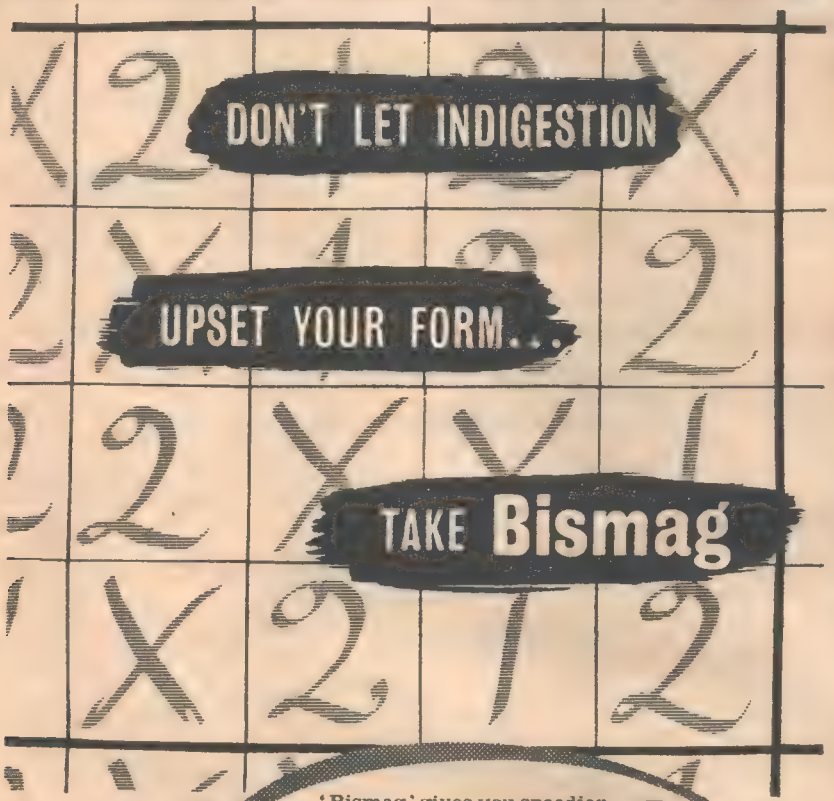

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MEDAL FOR A MURDERER

Continued from page 17

impact of the words. The names, it seemed to Yves, took on the sound of hammer blows upon an iron surface. He stared at his feet while shame mounted in his throat, sickening him.

The terrible thing about the recitation of the crimes of which he was accused was that it was only a repetition of what he had listened to his conscience saying nearly every day for five endless years. Many of the names were unfamiliar—he had forgotten or had never known them—but faces appeared before his mind's eye, conjured up by names. Defiant faces, whose defiance quickly faded. Frightened faces. Agonized faces. Humiliated faces, guilt-stricken in the knowledge that friends and secrets had been betrayed under the hand of the torturer. Pleading faces whose plea was for no more than quick oblivion. Dead faces—with a pock-marked wall in the background, smudged by their blood and the blood of others. . . .

At this moment, Yves felt the fear of death leave him. When compared with the shame he now felt and had been feeling for endless years, death promised to be kindly. His wound throbbed and ached. His mind revolved wearily around the problem of his behaviour during the time when he had been known as Martin Pontécoulant. Old familiar arguments flooded into his brain, but he rejected them contemptuously. It would be easier to die than to struggle for life which could only be a mockery. He shut his eyes and tried to shut his ears to the voice of Absalom, speaking with the words of his own conscience.

Eventually the Resistance leader finished and looked up from the document. "Have you anything to say?"

Yves opened his eyes. "I was not directly responsible for any torture, nor for any execution," he said dully. "I arrested many of the people named in the accusation, but only when their arrest was inevitable."

Absalom's eyes were bleak with disbelief. "Since you held the rank of captain in the *milice*, and were in command of the detachment at Quimper, that is hard to believe."

"It is true."

EIGHT pairs of eyes focused upon him. They reminded him again that he was pre-judged. For a second he forgot his self-loathing and turned to hating the owners of the eyes. They wanted everything so absolutely clear; they had projected themselves back to the time when they assumed that every hand which was not for them was necessarily against them. They would never admit that a man's behaviour could be sometimes grey; not jet black nor shining white.

A weary pride stirred in Yves. If he were to tell them the facts of his real innocence they would not believe him. He asked himself why he should give them the satisfaction of mocking him. If his protests would be inevitably futile, why utter them?

He thought then of Madeleine. For a second, a yearning to live came back. He resisted it and, believing that he was not fit to love Madeleine Loudiac, he encouraged his rising pride. Why not answer contempt with contempt? Why not die quietly and courageously and let these fools puzzle over the demeanour of a man they had thought to be a cowardly renegade? Let them do their stupid worst.

Absalom gestured impatiently. "Have you anything else to say?"

Yves took a deep breath. "Nothing," he said.

"Then you admit your guilt?"

Yves shrugged. "I have nothing to say." His voice was cold and contemptuous. It brought anger to the eyes of his listeners.

The Resistance leader turned to face his companions. He raised his eyebrows and, one by one, they spoke their verdicts. "Guilty. . . . Guilty. . . . Guilty."

Absalom then turned again to Yves. "You have been found guilty by a unanimous vote," he said. "I understand that in Paris nowadays the Resistance has become a joke in the stupid mouths of many people. In Brittany. . . ." His voice was brittle with contempt. "In Brittany we are less sophisticated and have longer memories. We think that you deserve to die."

He waited for a comment from Yves, but none came, so he continued in a bitter, condescending tone. "We have learnt that you fought well in the Vosges as Commandant Garnier after you had bidden us goodbye as Capitaine Pontécoulant. That information, added to the fact that none of us thinks you are worth the risk of being accused of murder, has decided us to spare your life. . . ."

YVES sat up, supporting his wounded arm in the cradle of the other one. "Then what . . .?" he started to ask.

"Shut your mouth!" Almost for the first time, emotion entered Absalom's voice. "You will be treated as you treated the men and women I have named, except that you will be spared the bullets and most of the imprisonment that you meted out to them, God rest their souls. You will be beaten with the *queue de boeuf*, your finger and toe nails will be torn out, your teeth will be removed and you will be branded 'Traitor' on the chest."

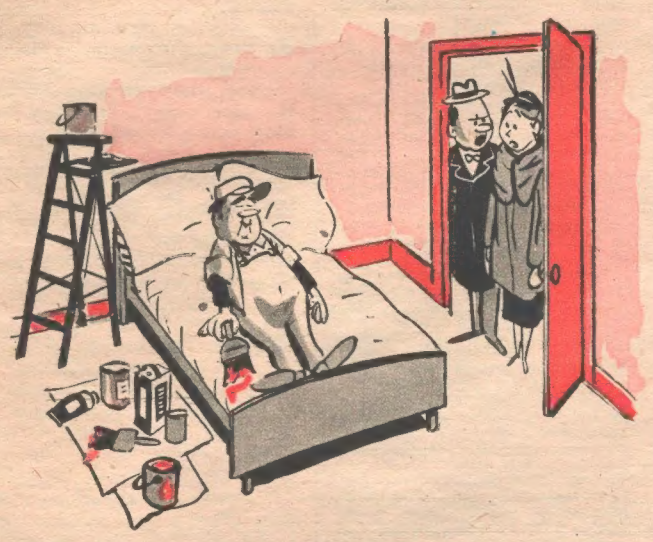
He paused, and then went on coldly: "While the sentences are being carried out you will be held in a deserted farm on one of the Iles de Glénaans which is never visited by tourists. When you have recovered from your injuries, you will be allowed to return to Paris where you belong—with the collaborators and politicians and sophisticates! If you come back to Brittany or attempt to institute police action against us for what we shall do to you, we shall forget our reluctance to kill you. You may remember that we shared the German skill in killing when the occasion demanded it. Don't think that you would escape. . . . Have you anything to say against the sentence?"

Yves stood up, supporting himself by holding on to the stanchion beside him. He was bitterly angry and his voice rang with indignation. "I have this to say. . . . You are mad! You believe me to be guilty of crimes deserving death. In that case, kill me. But do not commit the same bestialities as did the men you hated. Do not ape the Gestapo. Torture is the same whether it is applied in order to extract information or as a foul punishment. It is offensive to God and man. . . ."

Absalom strode across the deck and struck Yves with his open hand across the cheek, leaving livid marks on the pale skin. "Morality in your mouth is too nauseating to be borne, you swine!" he snarled. "If you want to plead for a quick death, then plead, but don't moralize. And remember that the men and women you tortured also pleaded for death!"

For a second Yves stood rigid and motionless. His judges were silent. Absalom, breathing rapidly, looked like the very apotheosis of hatred and vengeance. Then Yves's clenched fist

"Let's get this straight. You're *going* to the beauty parlour, or you've *been* to the beauty parlour?"



"You certainly did choose a restful colour!"

shot forward into Absalom's face. The Resistance leader staggered and toppled backwards over the skylight behind him. When he scrambled to his feet, spitting blood from his bruised mouth, his eyes were lunatic with anger. As he rose, his hand had disappeared into his coat and emerged holding a pistol. "Move once more and I shall kill you," he snarled.

Yves breathed deeply and answered him in a level voice. "Shoot if you wish." He stepped forward.

Absalom pushed the pistol into his stomach. "Stay where you are! I shall shoot. I warn you I shall shoot!"

"Then shoot."

Yves's hand came down to close over the pistol. At the same time he looked into the eyes of the man holding it. Having faced death, Yves did not fear it, although he no longer wanted to die. His lack of fear showed in his eyes and it weakened Absalom.

"Do I look like a guilty man?" Yves said, and still he came on. "No, Absalom, you are wrong. I am not guilty, but I am sick of the world."

In one quick movement, he jerked the gun from Absalom's hand. "Tell François to put the boat about," he said. "I have decided that I prefer to be judged by a court of law and not by a self-established court of fanatics."

The pistol in his hand covered the Resistance leader and the rest of the court gathered in the stern of the boat. Absalom stared at him. "Tell François to put the boat about," Yves said again. He would not himself turn to speak to the helmsman.

But the helmsman had turned, keeping one hand on the wheel. He had seen the blow struck and had watched the pistol being taken from Absalom. He hesitated.

Absalom, watching him, said, "François!"

The helmsman left the wheel and crept up behind Yves Garnier. He had a heavy spanner in his hand. He brought it down on the back of Yves's head. The pistol clattered to the deck and Yves sagged at the knees before pitching forward to lie at Absalom's feet. The Resistance leader picked up his pistol. Without looking at his companions, he said, "Let's get on with it." The *Princesse de l'Odet* continued on its course.

It had taken Madeleine a quarter of an hour to find a fisherman, and ten minutes longer to persuade him to take her to the Iles de Glénaans. It was close to midday, therefore, before the fishing boat passed between the first two islands of the archipelago. They went straight to the biggest island and searched among the yachts and fishing boats in the little harbour. No *Princesse de l'Odet*. They cruised from island to island, ignoring the smallest, which were mere pimples of rock, scanning each beach for the sight of the pleasure boat. Time passed. Each second seemed to Madeleine to be a drop of blood draining from her heart. As she strained her eyes for a glimpse of the *Princesse de l'Odet*, she also strained her ears to catch the sound of a shot or a burst of fire from a machine pistol. And she prayed.

They found the *Princesse de l'Odet* at ten minutes past twelve, moored in six feet of water on the Atlantic side of an island far away from those frequented by yachts and motor boats. The fisherman brought his boat in as close as he could to the shore. Madeleine went over the side into water up to her armpits and scrambled over slippery rocks to a strip of silver sand. Encrusted barnacles tore her hands and knees and made woebegone rags of her stockings. She was oblivious. Her heart was crying out for Yves.

She ran across coarse, wind-tortured grass towards the grey stone buildings of a little derelict farm. She ran automatically, conscious of nothing save that she would soon know whether he was dead or alive. As she approached the farm, her anxiety became unrestrainable and she shouted, "Yves! Yves, my darling! Yves, where are you?"

JEAN LOUDIAC appeared in the door of the farmhouse, his face suffused with anger. "Madeleine, you fool! What are you doing here?"

"What have you done to him? Have you killed him?"

"What is it to you?"

She stopped in front of her brother, breathless, her hair wild about her face, her eyes full of horror and accusation. "It is everything to me. Yves Garnier is my life. *Have you killed him?*"

"No."

"What have you done to him then? Tell me! I can see in your face that you have done something. Tell me, for God's sake!"

"We have thrashed him."

She rushed at him, sobbing, beating at him with her hands. "He is innocent, you fool. Innocent, I tell you. What else have you done to him?"

He caught her hands and pressed her to him, smothering the frantic movements of her body against his chest. Then he answered, "We have done no more than beat him . . . yet."

She broke away and forced herself past Absalom, standing on the threshold of the farm. She found Yves lying face downwards on a pile of straw. The sight of his naked back silenced her as abruptly as a bullet would have done. She flung herself down beside him and took up his head in her hands.

"Yves! Yves, my beloved, my heart! Will you ever forgive me? What have I done to you?"

She found the wound on his shoulder, lifting the filthy bandage gently, then catching her breath at the sight of the

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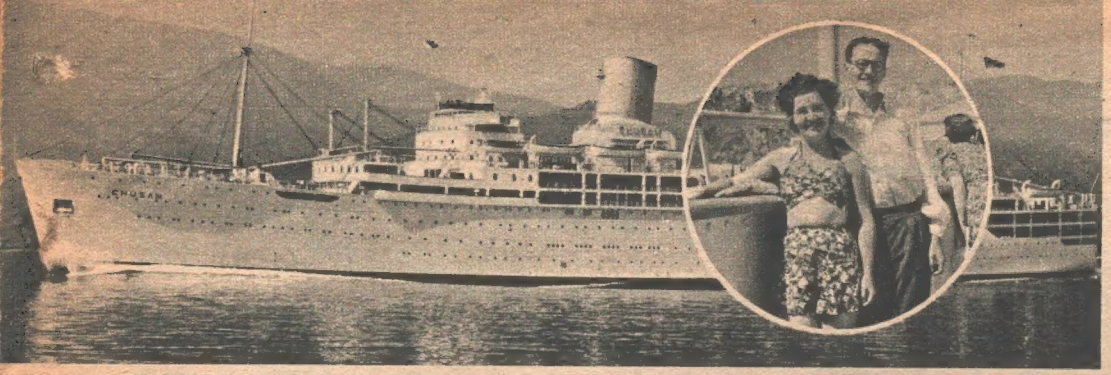

WIN £500 and 4,600-MILE HOLIDAY CRUISE in a LUXURY LINER!

TO the £500 *you* can win for this week's best *Bullet* JOHN BULL adds a fortnight's Mediterranean cruise for two—just such a prize as was captured last year by Mr. J. Barnes, 4 Queen's Grove, Chorley. You see him in this picture, with Mrs. Barnes, enjoying glorious sunshine whilst in the *Chusan*.

This year, you and your companion can be aboard the stately *Chusan* when she sails on Saturday, August 16 for a 4,600-mile holiday cruise. Through the Straits of Gibraltar you glide, heading for gay Barcelona, first port of call, where you land to explore the old Spanish city. A day or two later you step ashore on Majorca—then on you voyage to the North African coast for a visit to historic Casablanca—to that island paradise, Madeira—finally to Portugal's capital, Lisbon, for more sightseeing. As JOHN BULL'S guests, your shore excursions cost you nothing. As you sail up the Thames on Saturday, August 30, recalling the crowded thrills of your voyage, how thankful you will be that you entered that £500 coupon below!

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A fine roasting fowl accompanies each of the 20 chief prizes won with *Bullet* which was one of four or more on single coupon or plain-paper entry sheet.

SEASIDE PARTY OFFER NEXT WEEK!

Add 2, 3 or 4 Words to any of these "EXAMPLES"

To make a *Bullet*, add simply TWO, THREE or FOUR words of apt and original comment to any of the *Examples* below. To use an incomplete *Example*, first complete it with any one word in place of dotted line—then make your *Bullet* as usual.

Democracy's Ship
We Cut And Cut, But
Idle Hands
Political Mud
In Cherry-blossom Land
Good v. Evil
There Was A Time When
Husbands
On Her Own
Radio Advertising
A Little Laughter And
The Ancestral Home
Sheer Stupidity
When Auntie Went Cruising
Petted And Pampered
At Scotland Yard
String Of Lies
Weeded Out
Office Optimist
With A Sickening Thud

Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions

One Of The World's.....
Ready For The.....
Surrounded By.....
Essence Of.....
Everyone But.....
"Don't.....Him!"

POST ENTRY

"Bullets" 1,831 (or Xword 783), "John Bull," Long Acre, London, W.C.2 (Comp.)

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit—the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.
2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.
3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are full rate. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.
4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated May 17, and in JOHN BULL, dated May 24), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

"Bullets" Winners 1,826

FIRST PRIZE, £500: T. D. Mills, 39 Carisbrooke Road, Newport, Isle of Wight:

DOUBLY SWEET PROMOTION—AND NOBODY "SOUR."

£50: F. Bailey, 98 Highfield Road South, Dartford: WHEN EVERYBODY'S BROKE—WORLD IN STALIN'S "POCKET"?

£25: Miss R. Stevens, 70 Strathmore Road, Horfield, Bristol: HER FAMILY—WONDERFUL—I'M AN *Orphan*.

OTHER AWARDS: £10: J. Telfer, 51 Weensland Road, Hawick, Roxburgh: WITH ALL HIS SALESMANSHIP—"*Samples*" GIVE AWAY *Joe*. £9: L. E. King, 71 Sunnyside Road, Chesham, Bucks: DOESN'T AGREE WITH MALAN—HIGH COURT—HIGH TREASON! £8: R. G. Patterson, "Gwynfa," Wern, Rhosesmor, Mold: LIFTED THE WORLD AND—SHAKESPEARE'S ONLY "LEVER"—QUILL! £7: W. H. Tinsley, 32 Wilberforce Road, Walton, Liverpool: WHEN EVERYBODY'S CONTRARY—THAT DAY, MARY'S *Sweetest*! £6: Miss M. Pepys, 16 Sunbury Court Road, Sunbury-on-Thames: HER FAMILY—HAVE USE—HAVE *House*! £5: Mrs. A. M. Newnham, 16 St. John's Avenue, Kidderminster: PERON'S PRICE—MY *Fishmonger* GETS, ANYWAY! £5: W. H. Scott, 54 Cecil Road, Rochester: "WHAT'S A LICENCE, DADDY?"—SPOILT SANDY'S TELEVISION PROGRAMME!

Each of above winners also receives Easter Hamper as offered.

For ten winners of £2 10s. plus Easter Hamper see *"Bullets" Bulletin*.

30 Prizes of 10s. plus Easter Hamper and 2,000 "Good Shot" Prizes have also been dispatched.

CASH AND FOOD PRIZES FOR XWORDS!

This Way To Win

FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one*, *two* or *three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues **Xword 783**
1. A man is often pretty well off if he is said to have
5. It can prove disappointing to the gleaners
6. More than one has earned his place in history
7. Small ones are apt to bicker
12. Likely to be found in average garden
13. Give a wide berth to the kind boasting a handle
14. It's surprising how long they can last

Down Clues
2. Botanists can distinguish plants by
3. In many cases an old man looks haggard through being this
4. To a great many people, this is soft
6. It's easy to understand one making an unfair charge
8. It's a sad thing if goldsmith makes first-class craftsman do this by expecting too much work from him
9. Hot ones are almost always popular
10. British these have helped to win many a war
11. A pup isn't easy to

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amongst 1st Runners-up and up to
50 ROASTING FOWLS
—one with each Runner-up
Award value 10s. or over
Up to 500 "SIGNPOST" PRIZES —one for each 2nd Runner-up

XWORD 778 RESULT

WINNING WORDS. ACROSS: 1, Spiv. 2, Wait. 7, Batman. 8, Pier. 12, Gold. 13, Sister. 14, Kid. DOWN: 3, Arms. 4, Tones. 5, Poet. 6, Care. 7, Bell. 9, Odes. 10, Holt. 11, Food.

FOUR £100 SHARERS: C. McConnachie, 32 Montgomery Road Aberdeen; Mrs. T. Menzies, 1 Lismore House, Linden Grove, London, S.E.15; M. M. Shaw, 209 Bishopton Road West Stockton-on-Tees; R. Wood, 66 Bideford Road, Woodbank, Stockport, Cheshire.

Awards value £25 for 1st Runners-up shared by 78 entrants. Useful "Signpost" Prizes awarded to 2nd Runners-up.

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B.	
EX.	6d.
B.	
EX.	EXTRA TWO FOR 6d.
B.	
EX.	
B.	

Closing Postmark **1,831** Monday, April 28
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With this coupon (which you can enclose with your entry) send P.O. 1s. for six weeks' *Bulletin* and *Gazette* at REDUCED SERIES RATE—first copy dated May 10.
P.O. 1s. No. .....

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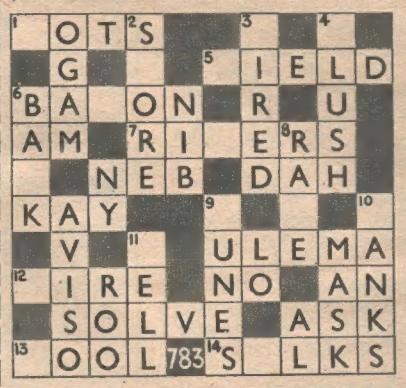

CLUE	EXTRA ANSWER	Total Fee
No.		6d.
No.		1s.
No.		2s.

(Total fee shown includes entry on Square)

Puzzle and form strictly copyright **783** Closing Postmark Monday, April 28

I enclose P.O. value ..... No. .....
Signed.....
Address .....
.....

In adjudication all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with one extra Answer to *one* Clue will represent *two* full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.). Square with one extra Answer to *two* Clues will represent *four* full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.) and Square with one extra Answer to *three* Clues will represent *eight* full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.) Use ink not pencil.

Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps covers dispatch to you of *Crossword Gazette* dated May 10.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.

lacerated flesh. Absalom had crossed from the door to stand behind her. He stooped and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't waste your pity, Madeleine. He is not a man. This one is an animal."

She turned, striking Absalom across the face with a swinging backhanded blow which jerked his head back. "An animal! You are not fit to be in the same room with him. Yves Garnier is innocent. He is more than innocent. He is so brave that he makes men like you seem the most craven, cowardly beasts on earth! God have mercy upon you for what you have done!"

YVES lay in his bed in her mother's house and smiled up at Madeleine. "It is all over, darling," he said. "I was guilty, but I am no longer."

"Guilty!" Incredulity brought huskiness to her voice. "How could you be guilty, having done what you have done?"

He raised his eyebrows. "Perhaps it does sound a little illogical. I did what I did for the best reasons. I knew that if I lifted a finger to save a prisoner while I was at Gestapo headquarters my safety as an agent would have been instantly threatened. I knew that my rank in the *milice* was incalculably valuable and that nothing could be allowed to jeopardize it—nothing, neither rage, nor anger, nor pity. Three separate times I was told of plans which threatened the existence of the whole Resistance movement in Brittany and I was able to give warnings, through London, which aborted those plans."

He shook his head. "But nothing could alter the fact that I daily arrested French men and women and delivered them to the hands of the Gestapo. Nothing could make me forget that I was forced, twice or three times a day, to stand and watch and smoke a cigarette and grin while my friends were tortured to death before my eyes. . . ."

He was silent for a long time. "I tried to get myself killed in Alsace and failed miserably. Yesterday, on the *Princesse de l'Odet*, listening to Absalom reading out the names of those I had arrested and watched under torture, I decided to let them kill me. Better late than never, I thought. I knew I could never bring you happiness. . . ."

Madeleine bent to lay her cheek against his. "You fool," she said. "You great fool! I love you. I knew that you hated yourself. I also knew that love would cure you in the end."

Yves moved his shoulders in the beginning of a shrug. "It might have done," he agreed. "But not now. In some strange way I have succeeded in exchanging peace of mind for pain at the hands of the comrades of the people I betrayed. Whether I could have survived without bitterness the other things they were going to do to me, I don't know, but you arrived. You arrived to save me from everything but a small beating. Yet the beating was enough, apparently. Love need no longer waste its time curing me of madness." He kissed her. Then he said, "Look at me, Madeleine, my beloved. I am no longer a pitiful, ridiculous misanthrope with a grotesque beard. I am fit to love you. I'm a man again."

She looked at him obediently. Then she said, "Look at me, Yves. Now look at me and know that I betrayed you. Are you sure you can love a treacherous woman? Are you quite sure you can forgive me for my faithless, blind stupidity?"

"I can, my darling," he answered. "And I think it is not a bad thing that there should be something to forgive between us. I was thinking of you as a goddess, but since one cannot forgive a goddess, you must be a woman. Which would you prefer to be, in my eyes?"

Madeleine answered him softly. "A woman, my dearest." Then she put her arms about him, her head down upon his unwounded shoulder; they lay like that, quite still, until Madame Loudiac disturbed them half an hour later.

THE END

FROM CITY TO CITY OVER THE ROOFTOPS

Continued from page 15

so dangerous as in a fixed-wing aircraft. The pilot merely has to disengage the rotor from the engine, set it in the auto-rotative position and let it spin round of its own accord — like the winged fruit of a sycamore tree. He can then guide the helicopter on to a piece of ground large enough to land on.

"But you don't have much choice," says Theilmann. "If the engine cuts out at normal speed, when you're 500 feet up, you can move only eighty feet in the direction you choose."

Because a pilot may not be able to find even the small space necessary for an emergency landing, B.E.A. will not run services into the centres of large towns until they have a multi-engined model. Brie hopes to have a Bristol 173, a twin-engined helicopter with seats for twelve to fourteen passengers, in service by 1954.

Wings That Fold Up

A multi-engined aircraft with twenty-three to twenty-five seats is expected in eight to ten years' time. Beyond that are jet-propelled models and a converter-plane with both fixed and rotary wings. After rising vertically from a tiny airfield, the rotary wings will fold away and the plane will assume the flight and speed of a jet-propelled air liner until it reaches its destination. Then the rotary wings will enable it to land in a small space.

Eventually, Brie hopes for rotor-stations in the centres of most large towns; otherwise the time saved by flying is lost in long road journeys from airport to city centre. Multi-engined helicopters will be able to fly in weather that would ground orthodox aeroplanes.

"We want to provide the type of service people don't have to look up beforehand," says Brie. "We shall work only profitable routes. We don't want to share business with the railways."

Thus, many of the services will be cross-country, east to west, where the railways are least efficient. Others will include water-crossings to the French Channel ports, to Ireland and to the islands round the coast of Great Britain. Brie is also interested in an inner and an outer circle round the Midland cities.

Already civic bodies are discussing sites for rotor-stations. In London, roof-stations over Victoria and Charing Cross railway stations have been mooted.

Manchester Corporation Airport Committee is considering plans for a helicopter terminus costing £1,500,000. Built on a bombed site, it would consist of a rectangular landing-deck measuring 300 feet by 250, built over a circular structure of ten storeys containing an hotel with 250 bedrooms, a restaurant to seat 300, a café for 500 and a 2,000-seat cinema.

Pilot Asked The Way

Meanwhile, helicopters have been granted licences for carrying passengers only under visual flight rules, that is, within sight of the ground. If cloud base is lower than 500 feet or horizontal visibility less than half a mile, the service has to be cancelled.

Even without navigational aids, Theilmann is not very worried if he loses his way. He was once practising blind flying, without passengers, at 10,000 feet when his navigational aid stopped working. Deciding to find his way back to Hatfield Airfield visually, he came down and broke cloud at 500 feet. He had no idea where he was and, to his dismay, failed to recognize any ground features.

Going still lower, he noticed some farm labourers working in a field, landed beside them and shouted: "Oi, which is the way to Hatfield?" "Over there," they said, pointing over a hedge. He followed their instructions and in a few minutes was home. THE END

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

The photograph on page 22 shows Sir Laurence Olivier when a boy.

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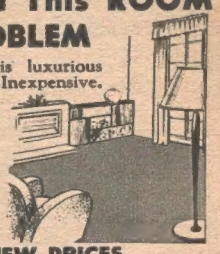

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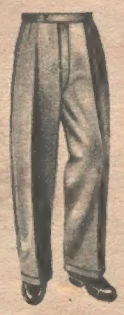

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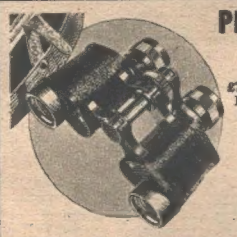

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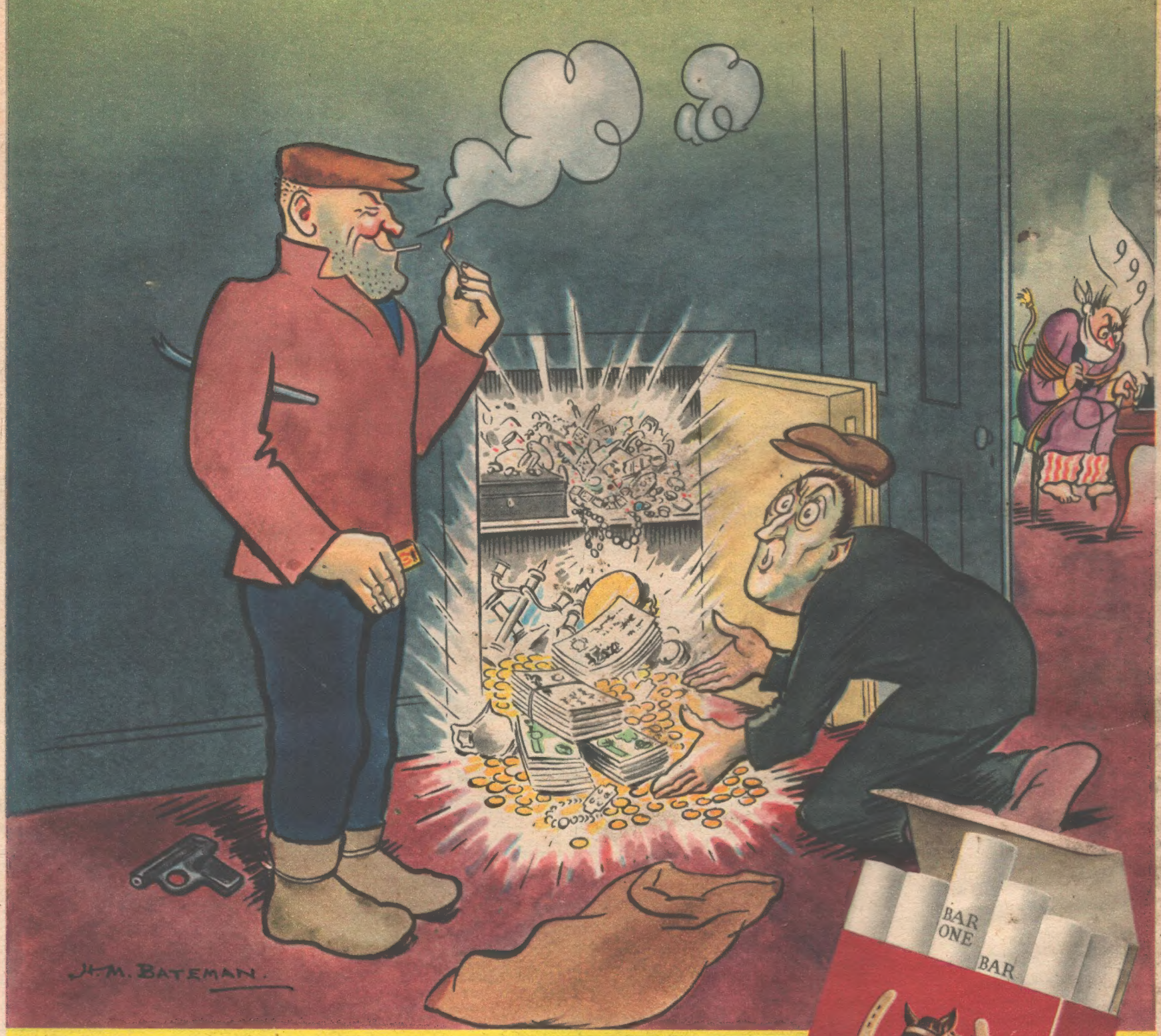

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